Why Gut Health Comes First

Hey folks, as we kick off 2026, I thought that it might be helpful for all of us to kind of move back into, back to basics when it comes to, you know, we talk about longevity, and we've talked about so many advanced concepts, right?

We've talks about gene therapy with Liz Parrish. We talked exosomes and stem cells and advanced tech and so much fascinating, fascinating strategies that are out there.

There's some incredible supplements. to support our longevity, but at the end of the day, it always comes back to foundations, right? It always come back, to the things that we do every single day.

Those basic lifestyle habits that fundamentally support, our ability to then do the more advanced things. And one of most foundational things of The Foundations, so the foundation of I believe lives in our gut.

It is said that disease or wellness starts and ends in the gut, there's so many disciplines that speak to this. Traditional Chinese medicine speaks to the got, Ayurvedic medicine goes to got.

Everything starts in got and there is a good reason for that. The got is where the outside world meets the inside world, you being the outside world being everything that enters into your GI tract from your mouth.

That tube that starts in the mouth, goes down your throat, becomes the stomach, the small intestine, and the large intestine and finally evacuates through the rectum.

Everything that lives inside that tube, that is we refer to as your gi tract, is fundamentally to your body the and our ability to manage that interface is what is critically important to our health in every single way.

We have so much of our immune system lives in our gut for that reason because it is in the gut that the body has to decide what belongs here and what do I need to reject.

This is where the immune systems first job is determining What is friend and what is foe? And we have this massive community of common cell bacteria and pathogens, all of the gut bugs, the trillions of gutbugs that help us to manage our health.

This is a symbiotic relationship. They are not us, they outnumber us and yet they are critically important to our well-being. Not only do we have to coexist with them, but we rely on them to generate for us a lot of the nutrients, things like short-chain fatty acids or certain vitamins that we need to be well.

So for this reason, I wanted to dedicate this first episode of The Year to gut health, because without our gut-health, we got nothing. So, yeah, I'm going to try to keep this as useful as possible for you guys.

This is not intended to be a masterclass, although, you know, it might be good place to orient yourself and nor is it intended be DIY fix your gut kind of podcast.

but it is intended to get you thinking about some of these different things to really think about, is this something that you need to focus on? Do you to go out and find a practitioner to work with who can support you in this journey if it comes to pass that, you decide that things are out of balance.

And I cannot stress to you enough the importance if you have an imbalance in your gut of finding that practitioner

who is going to walk with you and help to guide you.

There are so many different tools out there to fix our guts. The biggest nut to crack here is understanding where is the imbalance and where to begin.

So I'm hoping that with some of the things that I am going to talk about in this episode, it's going give you a chance to maybe knock down some the low-hanging fruit so that when you do find that practitioner or decide to go to the practitioner, you will have done some most foundational things at either restoring balance to gut or if you try a few things and it doesn't work for you, This is also information.

Signs Your Gut Is Out of Balance

And this is something I do want to lean into. I just interviewed an amazing doctor. Her name is Dr. Cynthia Keller, just the other day. That episode, it'll come out, I believe, around February, maybe beginning of March.

She is a gem. One of the concepts that she kind of brought back to the forefront for me is that, you know, when we try something and it doesn't work, the tendency is to get, to be disappointed and, oh, it didn't.

But here's the thing, everything that doesn' work becomes a piece of information. It becomes. Data point towards the step of understanding what can work or what might work.

Or what is actually out of balance. So when you try things and they don't land for you, and this happens a lot in figuring out gut health, because gut, health is complicated and It can be many, many different things.

So by no means am I trying to drill everything down into a simple, oh, well, it must be this kind of podcast. Rather, It's really to say, we have to start somewhere and every data point along the way is valuable, whether it's something that worked or something didn't work.

When you're sitting with a practitioner and you are going through with them, trying help them to understand you and learn you and get insight into what's happening with you, please don't leave out the things that didn't work.

Because sometimes that is a bigger hint to them than the thing that do work, all right? Plus it knocks out a bunch of stuff that you don t already have to do.

Now, here's some of the signs that your gut might be out of balance. Things like gas, bloating, pain, reflux, so that means when you get heartburn. So right, there's burping can be a sign of imbalance, constipation, diarrhea, like those are the obvious ones.

But the gas and the bloated is something that I wanna bring your attention to because, and actually even constibation and diarrhea because here's the thing.

The way that we get through our day, the way we that get to show up every day is that we adapt. As humans, we are so good at adapting. Even those of us who like to complain the most, at the end of the day, you're dealing with a lot of stuff.

What we do to get through it is we normalize. Normalization of bloating, gas, even reflex to a degree or burping and constipation or diarrhea or alternating between the two, until it gets really, really bad that we can't function, we will normalize.

So if you get to the end of the day and your pants are tighter than they were at the beginning of day, if really think about am I bloated and gassy often, I want you to sit back and think that and maybe think it through the because I remember when I used to work with clients as a holistic nutritionist, and I'm starting to kind of pine for those days, so I may have to go back to that someday, but I will tell you that one of the things that was so remarkable is when we would sometimes change a person's diet or clean things up, one the of things they would come back and marvel at, sometimes within a week, was Oh my gosh, Matt, I had no idea how bloated I was feeling.

I have no ideas how tired I am or how uneasy I felt all the time. Sometimes we've normalized how we feel to the point where It's just, it's the way we are.

And we think that that's how it needs to be. But it doesn't. Okay? So the gas, the bloating, acid reflux, burping, and burpings are related, but they're not the same.

Constipation, like we kind of forget the last time we went to the bathroom, that is just the ways we were. We've always been that way. Or the loose stools.

All of these things are signs that the gut is not doing well. Other signs can be things like fatigue, brain fog, things, like getting sick very often or getting, you're that person that gets that stomach flu every time it goes around.

That should not be the thing, right? That your gut is your defense system. So if things are constantly making you sick, then something in there is not working well, okay?

Stress, Diet, and Toxin Triggers

These are the signs and symptoms you wanna look out for. Hey, folks, I just wanted to throw a little message in here for those of you who are sending me all these incredible questions on social media or through YouTube or even on Spotify, wherever you're listening to the podcast.

I wish I could get back to each one of your personally, but unfortunately, And because I cannot, I created, about a couple of years ago now, a membership community where I get to hang out with people just like you.

I do live weekly Q&As, almost weekly anyway. We also do have podcast guests come in to answer everybody's questions and do presentations, you get to interact live with those podcast guests.

We will sometimes do challenges with some of the partners. Like in 2026, we have a mitochondrial enhancement challenge coming up where we're going to be testing mitochondria function.

we are going be to testing people's deuterium levels. If you haven't heard about deutereum, We've got podcasts coming down the pipes on that. And then people will be invited to follow a personalized protocol and then retest their mitochondria on the other side.

We offer that in the membership community and we do it at incredible discounts that you just can't find anywhere else. So if you're interested in hanging out with me and other like-minded people, which actually happen to include some pretty awesome practitioners and even some previous podcast guests who've come and joined the community, then I invite you to check it out on my website natnidam.com slash the dash longevity dash community or just go to natnim.

com and look for the longevity community tab at the top of the page. Click on that and see if this is right for you. I would love to see you there. and we could make 2026 our best year ever together.

So once again, that's natnidham.com. Just look for the Longevity Community tab at the top of the page. Now let's get back to the show. Next, what are the things that are constantly that our stressing our gut?

Why is this such a problem? Well, we've been talking about this a lot lately. The last solo episode I did was 10 ways to manage your stress. Chronic stress is absolutely one of the thing that absolutely will challenge your gut.

and it will damage your gut because mechanistically, when you're chronically stressed, you shut down your digestion. We're going to talk about digestion in a minute.

If you are not digesting your food properly, that in and of itself is damaging to the gut. That in itself will drive constipation. and it will drive damage to the gut lining.

So chronic stress, plus it keeps your cortisol levels high all the time. Excessively high cortisol level that are high too often is going to be bad, obviously for your blood sugar, it's bad for you brain, but also that excess cortisol that is always high, that never comes down, is a catabolic steroid.

It's a steroi that breaks things down. When you're stressed, you can't be digesting, can be building. So being in a chronic state of stress is ultimately a damaging thing for our gut health.

In addition, poor food choices. Now, I'm not here to lecture you, but I will say, and we're coming off the holidays here and many of us, we went into the holiday with really great eating habits and then the things start coming into house or you're going to parties, whatever it is, We start to slide in our habits.

That is another piece of the puzzle when it comes to poor gut health. over processed foods, excess sugar, fried foods foods that are just like packaged foods all of these things not only do they make us look bad because we end up getting weight from them but more importantly they are damaging to the gut so this is your reminder if you haven't already done it a lot of people will start january will turn over a new leaf and and start doing everything the right way again.

But if you've allowed the holidays to kind of leech into January a little bit, or it's a slippery slope you haven't found your way back from, this is your reminder.

This is the time to reset your nutrition and get back to your beautiful eating habits. And it doesn't have to be complicated, folks. It needs to whole foods, it needs be as clean as you can get them.

If they're not perfect, that's okay. Don't make yourself crazy. I am a really big fan of a Mediterranean style diet. it'll be different for many people just because different people's different food tolerances or whatnot.

But what we're doing is broad strokes, right? And then you may have particular circumstances that changes for you, but broad stroke for most people, we're going to be eating clean protein.

We're gonna be healthy fats. And healthy fat in my world means we are looking at things like polyphenol rich extra virgin olive oil. For our saturated fats, We might have some ghee.

we might eat some butter. It's a completely particular personal, if you will, scenario because we have different needs, different stages, and different ethnic backgrounds.

All I'm saying is whatever fat you're eating, make sure that it is the best quality that you can afford. On the vegetables front, I'm a big fan of vegetables.

I think that raw veggies can be very challenging to a lot of people, particularly in the winter time. That's not what most of us wanna be eating. So vegetables at the very least steamed is going to be easier for people to digest and it's gonna preserve a lotta those nutrients and give you access to the polyphenols and the fibers and all the nutrients that we know our vegetables are good for.

And by the way, when you pair them with that healthy fat, it allows you to be able to absorb some of the nutrients even more easily. So what have we got?

We've got our healthy protein, we've gotta healthy fats, We got are vegetables we're gonna prioritize. For most of us, were gonna to prioritize the vegetables that grow above ground because the ones that go below ground are starchier and more dense.

You can eat some, but again, this is going to rely on your state of health, on you activity levels, But again, we're still gonna eat all of them. Now, what about eggs?

Eggs are great if you tolerate them, dairy. Dairy is fantastic if tolerated. Do an experiment for me if find that you're bloated, cut out dairy for a week, see if your bloating goes away.

I just did it the other day. And you know what? I stopped putting milk in my coffee, which I don't, I didn't use to put milk and my Coffee. knew that milk made me bloated.

and then, you I had a latte and I was like, Oh my God, this is so good. I'm doing fine." And then the next thing you know, I am walking around like a balloon and I was like, what is going on?

And it took me a little while to kind of say, oh right, yeah, and back at dairy. And I took away the milk and guess what? The bloating went down. It was that simple.

Can I tolerate yogurt? Yeah, a little bit of yogurt I can tolerate. Everybody's going to be a bit different. Okay. So I'm not making blanket statements here, but I am saying the most common offenders in those food choices, even healthy food, choices are going grains, wheat, dairy, these are the ones.

And if you suffer from bloating and you have an addiction to eating raw cruciferous vegetables, things like broccoli and cauliflower, I'm telling you now, start cooking them.

You will find that you will tolerate them better. Raw broccoli and cauliflower is really hard on the gut. They are good foods, but they're better when they are cooked.

There's lots of other reasons for that, I don't want to go down too many rabbit holes here. So, better food choices. Also, processed meats. A lot of the negative research on meat for human health, if you look at the data, very often what these people are eating is a lot processed meat.

Digestion Basics and Better Meal Habits

So this is salami, cold cuts. And frankly, a few look a the recalls in the world, it has to do with processed meats. Stay away from them, at least while you're working on your gut health.

What else? Toxin exposures. So cooking in things like, I don't think anybody listening to this podcast ever does this, but if you still do this please stop now.

Reheating in plastic. Get rid of plastic containers wherever you can. Use glass. Glass is way cleaner. Yes, if drop it, it will break. It's okay, better that than doing anything with plastic.

So keeping plastic away from your food, keeping tin foil away your from food. I am still amazed that people still wrap their food in tinfoil to cook it.

No, don't do it. The aluminum is really bad for your brain, and it's really for bad your gut. So if you're gonna use aluminum to cook something, line it with parchment paper.

Okay? First parchment, then the aluminum, your food goes on the parchment if your even gonna go there. Things like nutrient depletions are really bad for our gut as well, when we could become deficient in zinc, for example.

Zinc is a very important element for us to produce digestive enzymes. So, nutrient depletion obviously is going to be a negative, it's going be factor, lifestyle factors, like I said before, stress, things like exercising.

Now, we need enough exercise to be healthy and to have a healthy gut, but those of you who are obsessed, those who you are maybe training for a high rocks competition or a marathon, be careful.

Overtraining will challenge your gut health badly. and actually even your immune health. So overtraining is a massive issue. If you don't exercise at all, that is also a problem.

Get out and go walking. But if you are one of those people that over trains, know that there are consequences to the gut. Dehydration. We don' talk about dehydration nearly enough.

Being dehydrated is a factor for gut health. It's a fact for your whole body, really. But one of the things that your body can't make when you're very dehydated, and by the way, if you are also deficient in zinc, is digestive enzymes.

And if your not making digestive enzyme, you not breaking down your food properly. If you aren't breaking your foods properly, it's just sitting in your stomach and it is fermenting and causing heartburn.

And then your doctor gives you a PPI, which is a proton pump inhibitor, because he says, well, you have too much acidity. But sometimes it's because you don't have enough digestive enzymes.

And if you Don't Have Enough Digestive Enzymes, and that food is sitting there and fermenting, forever, which I see a lot, there are consequences to that because what is the proton pump inhibitor doing?

It is stopping your stomach from producing hydrochloric acid, Well, guess what? If you're not producing hydrochloric acid, you can't process your minerals properly, things like calcium and magnesium, and now you are not absorbing them properly.

And there has been studies that have shown that people who are on long-term PPIs, this is long term use, not six to eight weeks, which is what they were originally intended for, People who use PPIs for years have a higher incidence of cardiovascular disease, of heart attacks, and of bone density issues.

Because it's because of those minerals, it because the calcium and the magnesium, because they're not being chelated, they are not be absorbed properly, can't be used by the body properly.

And now this takes a toll on the lining of your blood vessels and on your bones. I think we can all agree that these are massive hits to our longevity.

So PPIs, I'm not a medical doctor and I don't know every one of you. So if you've been prescribed PPI's, just know this, they were developed to be used for six to eight weeks at a time to allow the stomach to heal, to allows for a change in circumstances so that you wouldn't need them anymore.

They were never intended to used on the long term. Now, if are listening to this podcast, and you've been on a PPI for fill in the blank, a year, two years, five years 10 years.

really consider the fact that it would be a good idea to work with a practitioner to get yourself off the PPI so that your body can start producing stomach acid the right way and digesting your food properly.

Again, this podcast is not meant to solve all the problems. It is meant bring attention to certain issues and then help you to point you in a direction where you can go get help to it get it solved.

Okay, what's next? We've talked about the signs and symptoms that your gut may need attention. Now, what are the elements of a good, healthy gut, right?

What are, the, elements that we're looking for? We're Looking for healthy digestion. We just talked About PPIs. we want to be able to break down our food properly on our own.

And what this means, ideally on own, but as we age, that may not be possible. now, What does this mean? It is said in the land of nutritionists, where I was first trained, that your body needs to be able to break down food in your gut so that it can absorb it and it then assimilate the nutrients.

You can be eating the best diet on the planet. If your digestion is not good, if you're not breaking that food down properly, you are not going to able absorb that and your bodies won't be assimilated.

And that means you could be spending all this money on great food and still be nutritionally deficient. That would suck, right? So we want to have proper digestion.

And that requires us to be making enough digestive enzymes, releasing those pancreatic enzymes. We want our liver to processing food properly. If we're lucky enough to still have a gallbladder, we wanted to release bile.

when it senses the presence of fat so that we can emulsify those fats and we could move things through the digestive tract properly. So proper digestion is key and I'm going to talk a little later about how do we maybe address digestion that goes sideways.

When does our digestion get challenged? Well, it gets challenged when Got that thing, that first thing that I said, stress. When we are stressed, when we sit down to eat, we will not digest our foods properly.

How is that possible? Well, it's a survival mechanism. If your body thinks you're under threat, digestion is the last thing it thinks, you need. And this is where living in a constant elevated sense of doom or stress is going to compromise our ability to have good digestion and to good gut health.

So what can we do about that? I want to give you a couple of solutions as we go along here. One of the practices that comes from us, from traditional people who are more traditional, and I'm not going to say that you have to pray every time you eat, but if it aligns with you, if this resonates for you that might be the thing that It could be 20 seconds.

It can be just closing your eyes, smelling the food, being with the foods, expressing gratitude for this food. That alone can enough to get you out of the rush, rush rush of your day and into a state of rest and digest.

What we want to do is flip out a sympathetic state and flip into parasympathetic state, that's rest in digest, when we're sitting to eat our meals. It can look like a prayer, it can like look a blessing, It doesn't have to have anything to do with prayer or anything at all.

It could just be sitting in front of that food, putting your phone away, Putting your computer away. And trust me, these are traps that I fall into as well, right?

We're like, oh, this is great. I'm going to just sit down. bad idea. That's called doom scrolling or reading your emails. You're going to read that email that's going send you to the moon or whatever.

Or hopefully you're sitting with someone whose company you enjoy. Take a moment, stop, breathe, relax, take a sip of water. We'll talk about some of the supplements that we might take to help our digestion if we need it a little bit further.

But if you don't want to use supplements, then this might be the time if something bitter to start the meal and this is a practice out of Ayurvedic medicine and it's also a practise out a lot of traditional diets.

Like if you look the way the Italians eat, they'll have like a bowl of bitter greens like arugula with some olive oil, salt, maybe a little bit of lemon.

That is a strategy. Not only is it tasty, but it's actually a strategic to get your digestive juices going. In Ayurvedic class in school, my professor used to talk about having a bolus of ginger or a little shot of Ginger before you eat your meal.

But definitely having something bitter or something to start those digestive juice is going might be a really great way to Start a meal But before you did that, remember you sit, you breathe, come into presence, look at your food, smell your foods, prepare your body to receive the food.

Digestion starts actually when you start thinking about the meal. You can feel the salivary glands starting to work when your looking at food and thinking of it.

First thing, we've calmed ourselves down. We've maybe started with something to get our digestion going. If you have blood sugar issues, you might start before your meal with a little bit of apple cider vinegar and water.

if that resonates for you, that'll help to mitigate blunt the bloodsugar later on. And you may be sitting there going, well, what's this got to do with digestive health?

Everything. Okay, if we don't have good digestion, we are not going to have a good gut health. So digestion is key. Now, what's the next step? There's a third step here that many people don t even think about anymore, but I think is something that we really all need to think even once in a while.

It's chewing your food. I'm not going to sit here and tell you to count how many chews, but I am going say that for many of us, because we're rushed, we are always moving fast, and especially if we were distracted, that we often are not chewing our food well enough to break it down properly.

And if it is not properly broken down and chewed, you're going have a much harder time digesting it and extracting the nutrients out of it that your body needs.

So chewing your food thoroughly is a major, major piece of the puzzle. Now, the last thing I want to bring to your attention is drinking while you're eating.

And by drinking, I mean anything. I means water, pot, like anything, not that any of you are drinking pop, maybe some of your are, but any kind of, if you drink a lot of fluids, during your meal, you are essentially diluting your digestive juices.

I'm personally a huge fan of hydrating in between meals, maybe having a little something to drink after my meal. And I am not talking about alcohol here, nor is this going to be a lecture about I don't think alcohol is our friend when it comes to digestive health.

It's not our friends when comes the longevity, it's our not friend period.

Gut Barrier, Liver, and Gallbladder Support

But even drinking a lot of water while you're eating is going to, number one, cause you to bloat and number two, is gonna compromise your digestion because all that water is doing is diluting the digestive juices that your stomach is producing or maybe that you are taking as a supplement.

So if you a big drinker during the meal, Cut it out. Avoid drinking a lot of fluid during your meal. You might wanna take a little sip of water here and there or a sip or something here in there, but try to avoid the big volumes of fluid, okay?

Now, what's another element of gut health? The integrity of your gut barrier. And this is what we're trying to protect here. You've probably heard that the gut lining is one cell thick.

It's super thin. Now the good news is that renews itself really fast all the time. Every 30 days, it's turned over. But the bad news is that it's also really easy to damage.

And so damaging the gut barrier is one of the challenges of all of things that we've talked about until now, right? Whether it is eating the wrong foods, chronic stress, not chewing our food, or not digesting our foods.

All of these things can compromise and be a challenge to the integrity of gut lining. The integrity in that gut-lining has everything to do with making sure that the right things get in and that wrong things stay out.

All right, so that's all I'm gonna say on gut barrier integrity. We wanna keep it solid and all of the things that we're talking about is what is going to support that gut-barrier integrity?

Now, proper liver and gallbladder health. Proper liver, and Gallbladder health is integral to gut health, why? Especially the gall bladder, because the Gall Bladder is who is responsible for releasing bile when it detects that were having high fat.

What if you don't have a gallbladder anymore? Sadly, the gall bladder is very often treated as a spare organ by a lot of medical professionals. I was very fortunate early in the game that I sent to a gut surgeon, a GI surgeon because I discovered to have large gallstone.

And I didn't know anything at the time. If he would have told me that I needed to have my gallbladder out at that time, I might have agreed. The good news is I came across a guy who looked at me and said, you know what?

There are millions of people out there that take their gallstones with them to their grave. I would wish to you that you are that person or maybe that figure out how to shrink it, which is a different story.

But the good new is he advised me to keep my Gallbladder and to just modify my diet. So I've done an episode on gallbladder health. I think it was last year.

You may want to go check it out, but suffice to say, if you still have your gall bladder, you want It sucks, but things can be managed, right? You may find that you don't really tolerate fatty meals.

You want to take ox bile as a supplement with fatty meal, which will help you to break down the fatty foods and it will kind of replace your own bile acids.

So if you don't have a gallbladder, you're going to want to mitigate for that. But we want make sure that we maintain, because they're all part of the team here, we a healthy liver and a health gall bladder so that everything works towards better gut health.

All right. What's another hallmark of a Healthy Gut? microbial diversity. So this is your gut microbiome. Now we are not going to solve all the problems of the gut micro biome here, but I will say this.

If you've never had your microbiome tested and you have any kind of gut issues, take this as your invitation to find a practitioner and do a good gut microbiomes test.

There are some really good tests out there. One of my favorites is a company called Vytract. Now, VyTract doesn't sell direct to consumer, so you're gonna need to yourself a practitioners who does use VYTRACT and will use it to understand what is going on in your gut.

But getting that view before you go willy-nilly buying probiotics and prebiotics and all the things is going to be a major piece of the puzzle for your gut health.

And it will affect all of pieces we've talked about. Having a healthy microbiome is gonna affect our digestion. It's gonna effect our ability to maintain a health gut barrier.

So it is worth the investment in time and money to get that microbial diversity established and measured with a good gut test. So I mentioned VITREC because I think these guys, first of all, it's a very well-priced test and it is very accurate.

It is a fantastic view of the gut. There are others out there, there's the GI map, There's so many gut tests. So the first step is to find someone who you trust.

There is a few really great practitioners out. there. Grace Lu, who is the gut goddess. She literally is. The gut Goddess, she's amazing. I've interviewed a number of practitioners on this podcast.

Any good functional medicine practitioner at this point is assessing gut microbial health. as a part of taking care of the whole human. So maybe we'll do a whole episode on the gut microbiome, but I would say that whatever you do before you go buying a bunch of probiotics, even though I think there's some foundational ones out there that are pretty good, make sure that you get a gut-microbiome test, especially if you know you've got some kind of imbalances.

Some of the foundational probiotics on the market that you might want to think about trying out and see how you feel. There's a category of probiotic called spore biotics.

Uh, there's company called thrive, just thrive health. Those guys make a great. um, foundational probiotic that is a spore biotic that I think is worth anybody trying out.

Uh, I also like it because they make it in a gummy form and you guys know I love a good gummy and it tastes amazing. If you don't want to gummy, it's okay.

They make in capsules too. That makes you feel more grown up. Fine with me. I mean, like the little gummy. It makes me happy. but they have a great foundational probiotic.

The other one that's quite good that I think is also a good baseline probiotics, if you will, is seed. really, really solid formulation. But beyond those, I think when you start getting into the more sophisticated probiotics, and I just think that it's a really good idea to get a microbiome test to figure out what you are lacking in before you started throwing acromansia in there, right?

Find out if you're low in acrimansio. Do you need it? Here's the dirty little secret about acromancia that nobody likes to talk about. Too little acromantia?

No good. It actually, gut microbiomes that have little to no acrimantium are associated with microbiome that cause people to become fat. Too much acromancia?

Nobody likes to talk about this. It munches away at the mucin layer, so there's a mucus layer on that gut lining of yours, and that mucous layer needs to be not too thick, not to thin, just right.

Well, when we have the right amount of acromansia, it helps to maintain the appropriate muce and layer of our gutlining. If we don't have, if we have too much acromantia, well, now you have two many of these guys munching away at the mucin and guess what?

It can deplete the mucin, in and of itself can damage the gut lining. So microbial diversity, very important. We're gonna talk about, what I'm gonna to talk now, one of the ways to nurture microbio diversity is through our food and eating a variety of different foods, eating lots and lots of difference vegetables.

If you're gonna eat some fruit, and fruit's great in small amounts, make sure to stick to those berries, maybe have some kiwis, eat apple peels.

Microbiome Diversity and Fiber

Apple peals are great for acromantia, by the way. You can eat fruit but eating fruit as appropriate for your goals and depending on where you are at in your journey.

But definitely, eating a variety of vegetables, like vegetables you've never even heard of, is crucial to maintaining good gut diversity because it's all those fibers, all of those polyphenols.

Now, if you're a low fiber consumer, and this is one of the big challenges that people talk about in gut health, is that most North Americans don't eat enough fiber.

This is a topic I just thought of right now as I'm talking to you. And it is critical, right? We should be getting 30 to 35 grams of fiber a day. Most of us, if we're lucky, are getting 20. Maybe it's not a lot of people, not even 20 You must get fiber because fiber is what feeds the microbiome.

It's what feed the gut bugs. Its not about you. it also helps you to feel full. Also helps to keep you regular. Now if you eat 10 grams of fiber now and you're listening to this and when you are one of those people that says okay Nat said I need fiber.

I'm going to go out. Im going go to 35 grams fiber tomorrow. i promise you you will hate me. because you will blow up like a balloon. So if you're a very low fiber eater now and you want to work towards increasing your fiber, do it very gradually.

Because if go too hard too fast, You will suffer the consequences with a lot of bloating. Your gut microbiome will be kind of maybe happy, but it will not be equipped to deal with all the extra fiber and you're going to end up super bloated and gassy.

One of the strategies actually that I'd like to point you towards is using a food diary, something like a chronometer. to track your food for a week. This is one of the most helpful strategies I found when I was practicing as a nutritionist with my clients, is getting them to check their food a for week, everybody was surprised.

Some people weren't getting any protein, other people were eating any vegetables, others were shocked at how much sugar they were consuming, like way too much.

And almost everyone, realized, oh my gosh, I thought I ate a lot of fiber. I'm getting nothing in my fiber using these food diaries. These food logs is a really, really great way to get an idea of where you're at and giving you guidance on how to Get to where You want to go.

And you were going to say to me, yeah, well, you know, when I take out, it's like really hard. Eat less takeout, eat simpler foods, Eat whole foods and it'll be a lot easier to log.

One thing I haven't talked about yet, good gut motility. So this is how often you poop is really the bottom line. We want to poop every day. Some people say we should be pooping two to three times a day, you know what?

I'm a little moderate on that one. If you're poopin once a Day, I think you are doing really, really well. Your poop should not take effort. It also should NOT fall out of your body like liquid.

You want to be in that world where, you know, it tells you exactly what texture and what form you're looking for. If you are pooping little hard chunks like a goat, your constipated.

pooping liquid, you have diarrhea. So check out where you are on that scale. That is gonna be really great information for any practitioner that you're working with.

Any good practitioner is going to ask you for this information. If there's food in your poop, If you can see food in your poop, that means you're not digesting your food properly.

You may not be chewing it and you are definitely not digest it properly, so food, discernible food is definitely a sign of poor digestion and that you have work to do.

good gut motility is crucial. Interestingly enough, when people start taking digestive enzymes and using things like ox bile and Tudka to support the liver and the gallbladder, we start to see better motilty.

When I used to get really constipated, if I started to my gall bladder, my liver, and take digestive enzyme within a day or two, my constipation was almost resolved.

So definitely if you're constepated, you want to think about these things as possibility, possible ways of addressing it in addition to hydration and proper fiber and healthy fats and all the other things.

Also cutting dairy. Dairy can make people constipated. Okay, so let's review. The lifestyle habits that lead to good gut health is exercise. Not too much, not too little.

Sleep, good sleep is going to be important for our gut health. And you know, it's not that, I mean, well, first of all, when you sleep enough and you asleep well there's time for your body to repair and restore itself and your gut is part of that repair-and-restore project.

Sleep deprivation is a killer for gut health. It's a kill for everything else. So fixing your sleep, managing your stress, eating healthy foods, making sure that you're in a parasympathetic state when you are eating, being hydrated, but not during the meal.

I know so many rules. Once you build the habits, it's easy. Hydration, really important. What you eat, how you and when you eat, and of course your state when eat.

Now, when we eat is important. That is one thing I haven't talked about yet. And that is respecting your circadian rhythm by meal timing. So for most people, we're going to talk a little bit about intermittent fasting here, but For many people, intermittent fasting has become a very convenient way for them to manage their lives because it takes breakfast off the table.

They don't have to think about eating until 12 o'clock in the afternoon. And it can work for a lot of people. But I will tell you that it's not gonna be ideal every day for everybody.

For most people, it's not going to be ideal. Especially for women, we do better if we eat a good solid protein meal first thing in the morning. Research shows that if you eat good, solid, protein meals first in morning, you're less likely to overeat later in day.

And I will also tell you that in a world where we're not hitting our protein goals to begin with, that first protein is really important. because now we've upped the ante.

We have less hours to get our protein in. So good gut health requires that we eat solid meals at good intervals of time and preferably that, we stop eating at least three hours before bed.

Why? Because while you're sleeping, for starters, your body has other things to do. If you have a full stomach when you go to bed, all that repair and rejuvenation and restoration that's supposed to happen, is going to get pushed aside because your body's got an out deal with this food in your stomach while you're trying to sleep you will notice for those of you who measure your sleep scores you'll notice that your sleeping scores will never be great when you've eaten too close to bedtime so you need to give your digestion arrest.

You need to give the digestive system a rest. And the best time to get it a arrest is overnight. An even better time, if you're going to skip a meal, it turns out that the meal to kind of skip or go very light on is dinner.

The problem is that socially it's hard to manage, right? So do the that you can, but no matter what, try to be done with food by 7 PM at night, by the time the sun sets.

Now, If you live where I live, that's four o'clock right now. But I don't stop eating at four o'clock most days because for my family, we're going to have a meal around six or seven o clock at night.

But definitely try to finish your last meal at six, seven at nights. And then don t eat again until the next day when you wake up, let's say seven or eight or nine in the morning.

Look at that.

Motility, Meal Timing, and the 4 Rs of Healing

You've got a beautiful 12, 13 hour window of no food which gives your digestive tract a beautiful break to do the repair work that it needs to and that way you can start fresh the next day.

I'm not a big fan of snacking through the day, some people with hypoglycemia issues may need to that. That's a whole other podcast unto itself. I typically prefer people to eat three meals and skip the snacks if they can.

There are situations where snacking might be indicated. eating balanced meals you're getting enough calories you are getting a good balance of protein to healthy fat to those low glycemic carbs you should be able to make it easily

three to four hours between meals meal timing check is done we've already talked about sleep all right I want to close with a concept of gut healing that I learned when I was in nutrition school.

And we call it the four Rs of Gut Healing. Many of you may have heard of this before, right? What do the 4 Rs stand for? And this is a brilliant, brilliant strategy.

Somebody just said to me the other day, oh, I have 4 R's of healing. It's this magical template. I'm sitting there going, yeah, but I've learned about that in school, and I don't think you came up with it.

But you know, who knows? Everything that's old is new again sometimes. Here are the four R's of gut healing. First R is remove. Remove the offenders, right?

So we've talked about what they all are. It could be eating the wrong foods, it could alcohol, bad lifestyle, excess stress, not chewing your food, eating foods that don't agree with you.

Foods that are otherwise healthy but don t agree your system. Whatever that is, Get it out of your diet. The obvious things that most nutritionists or dietitians or health practitioners will remove from a person's diet when they're not sure what's going on is the first thing we're going to go after is eggs, because eggs are very, very allergenic for a lot of people.

Wheat. at most grains but not all grains, but definitely wheat, dairy, sometimes nuts. It's a good idea to get rid of nuts at first and we can always bring them back.

And when people are despairing in front of me, I'm like, look, we're just doing this as an experiment. Let's see how you feel and then we'll reconsider.

Of course, alcohol. Alcohol, if you're having gut issues, guys, Alcohol's gotta go. The other one that sometimes has to go for people embrace yourself, you're not going to like this, is caffeine.

And especially on an empty stomach, caffeine can be really, really irritating to a gut that is already in trouble. So you may need to cut the caffeine for a period of time, or you might need make sure that you get something into your stomach before you have your coffee just to buffer it.

Okay? So that's remove. The next R, and there's actually two of them, we sort of cheat a little bit, is replace restore. So this is where we want to restore digestive capacity, for example.

And so this is where we're, first of all, replacing, we are bringing in a nutrient-dense anti-inflammatory diet. So I just talked about a lot of the things that we remove.

We might also take out nightshades if inflammation is a problem. Nightshade is things like white potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, eggplant, goji berries, all of these foods can be inflammatory to certain people.

And then we want to restore digestive capacity. And this is where the conversation around digestive enzymes comes in. Digestive enzymes can be incredibly helpful for people.

We've got something like HCL, which is a digestive enzyme that we use particularly around protein, like animal protein foods. And then there, and then we have broad spectrum digestive enzymes.

I really like mass times by, um, by optimizers because it's a full spectrum, digestive enzyme. It's really good. They have the HCL separate and just those two products alone taken with your food can be really, really powerful at helping you to break down your foods properly.

That's the one brand that I use. I really like them. We'll put links and codes to stuff in the show notes. probiotics earlier. BiOptimizers has a really great probiotic, maybe called Probiotic Breakthrough.

It's a very interesting, very intelligently designed probiotick. it might be one of those ones that you might want to try. But I digress. The other way to support digestion, I may have mentioned it earlier, just is having bitters before the meal.

That might too much work for some people. So Just Thrive Health actually has formula that is a pill. It's a one capsule, you pop it 20 minutes before your meal and it'll stimulate your digestive system to get going and prepare to receive the food.

So those are some products that can be really helpful and that's what we're doing in the replace and restore kind of stage of gut healing. Next, re-inoculate and replenish.

Now, this is where the probiotics, prebiotics, fibers, all that stuff comes in, but I'm going to say this again. Yes, there are a couple of foundational probiotic that you can try out, But if you're really having digestive issues, you want to get tested.

You want to get that microbiome tested so that when you're replenishing, you are doing it, especially with probiotics, with the right stuff. Now, other things you can re-inoculate and replenish with are fermented foods if you tolerate them, so things like good quality yogurt or kefir.

That's dairy. You can get yogurt that's made with coconut milk. Goat's milk can be much easier to tolerate for a lot of people. Of course, stay away from the sweetened stuff.

go for the really high quality yogurts that are unsweetened, that come from grass-fed cows. be selective. Things like sauerkraut, the kind that comes out of the fridge, not the come kind off a shelf.

Kimchi can be great. There's some really nice traditional foods that have natural probiotic in them that can really, really healthy. The other thing that I like, and actually it can come in the replace, restore or re-inoculate or even in next repair section.

And that's something like bone broth, which I can't believe I haven't mentioned bone breath yet. I've done a whole episode on gut health. Bone broth is going to be particularly healing to the gut.

It's got all the nutrients, all of the delicious nutrients that you need to heal that gut lining. Especially if you're using gelatinous bones in there and I like to put in Sometimes I'll put in some turmeric root and ginger root in my bone broth while it's cooking.

It gives it great flavor and it also gives us some really nice nutrients. And it is really great for calming down the gut, right? Because ginger and turmeric are anti-inflammatory.

So this brings us to the last stage, which is repair, repairing the gut. And this is where we're going to use things like L-glutamine, zinc, omega-3, we want to make sure vitamin D3 is up, aloe vera, Juice can be very, very…

This is the aloe vera, the gel, not the leaf. Leaf is bad. The actual gel from aloevera can very soothing to an irritated gut. If you get heartburn, deglycerized licorice lozenges can really helpful.

Things like demulsant herbs, like marshmallow roots, a marshmallow root tea, can to be really smoothing to irritated tissues from that reflex. And then we can get into the more advanced stuff.

So things like peptides, there are some really great gut healing formulas out there. My favorite, you guys have probably heard me talk about it before, Ultimate GI Repair by Level Up Health.

Yes, it's a bit of an investment, but it has everything that you need in it. So it is a very powerful tool. You could just do 30 days of that. And probably if you've done all the other things we've talked about, if things are not too bad, it can be a really powerful to helping to heal the gut.

If you don't want to use peptides, because peptide are still a new frontier for a lot of people, Bioptimizers also has another product that is a powder that's fantastic.

It's called Gut Breakthrough. We'll put the link in the show notes. They've got it both in vegan formula and non-vegan formula. It tastes really good.

One of them is vanilla, the other one's chocolate. You take a scoop, you mix it in water and you drink it. It's delicious and it has everything you need in there.

Again, just no peptides to heal the gut lining. So you don't have to be into peptide. If you're not into peptides, no worries. There's other solutions.

People have been healing guts since the beginning of time. Okay, so I am a fan of peptides, but I also recognize that either people can't afford them or they don't want to go there.

And if you're not comfortable with going to peptide, there are definitely some other fantastic options. Bioptimizers gut formula is one of those strategies that I think is next level.

Of course, I can really finish this episode without talking about do bio-regulators fit into the gut discussion? And they most certainly do. Now, bio regulators, for those of you who don't know what they are and haven't caught…

As a matter of fact, last January, I re-released a bio regulator 101 episode. You may want to go back and listen to that. But before you do that, there are bio regulators that are specific to gut health.

There's a stomach bioregulator, there's the liver bior regulator, and there is a pancreas bi regulator. And we would of course always underpin them with a blood vessel bi-regulator.

Why do I think that bioregulators can be helpful for gut health? Well, think of it this way. If the stomach bi oregulator is going to help the to resume producing digestive enzymes the way it used to, that's gonna be a plus.

if the liver bi-regulator helps the livers, which rejuvenates anyway, but basically helps to support the re-juvination of the lever and restore proper function, That's a win.

And then the pancreas, which is working so hard to generate all the insulin, generate the pankreatic enzymes, maybe it needs a hand. Maybe you've been using a GLP-1 for a while.

maybe the Pancreas could use some love. So supporting the pantreas, the liver and the stomach, doing a 30-day run of those three bioregulators would, I think, is an incredible strategy.

I would do that once a year, Twice a year even three times a, year for 30 days just two capsules a day of each one for thirty days a few every few months i think is a beautiful way to support gut health and it's not going to replenish the microbiome But it is going to bring some attention and some love and rejuvenation to those critical organs of digestion.

Now we'll put the link in the show notes of where I get my natural bioregulators if that's something you're interested in. But like I said before, there's many different ways to skin this cat.

What's most important is that we remember that need to remove the things that are damaging the gut and we need be able to restore ourselves to a nutrient dense beautiful diet that is going to feed us properly.

All right, that's it for Gut Health today, you guys. Hopefully you got some value out of this episode. Let us know in the questions, let me know, in comments, and the question, wherever you're listening to this podcast, or come check me out on Instagram, at NatalieNidam, we'll be posting there.

You can put it in, the comments there, Or if you wanna hang out with me and you want to continue this and any

other conversation, You could come join me in my membership community.

And we do live office hours in there. I have experts come in who talk, who've been on the podcast and there's some crazy, incredible practitioners that are already group members.

It is one of the most supportive, incredibly knowledgeable communities I've. ever been a part of if I do say so myself. I learn stuff in there every single day.

Now if you want to if, you're interested in the membership community all you got to do is go to natnidam.com my website and you will see at the top of the page there's the longevity community you can click on that tab and that'll take you down to see what your options are in terms of joining the community.

So thank you so much for being here, folks. I'm so grateful for you guys. So grateful to be able to do what I love every single day. Thanks to you. And, uh, let me know how your guts do it.

Have a great year. Happy 2026.