How Gut Bacteria Affects Your Health Transcript

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Introduction and Amy Myers Bio

Welcome, everyone, to the MS and Neuroimmune Summit. I'm here with my good friend, Dr. Amy Myers. and, let me read her bio for you. She's a medical doctor, a two times New York Times bestselling author.

She's an internationally acclaimed functional medicine expert. physician who specializes in empowering those with autoimmune issues. Third issues. Sibo.

And you'll learn more about Sibo, Candida, and gut issues to reverse their conditions and take back their health. She's spent more than two decades working as a physician and including funding her own clinic.

then she lost, Amy Myers, MD, an e-commerce wellness brand that reaches millions of people in more than 140 countries around the world. again, among many wonderful books, The Autoimmune Solution, Thyroid Connection, the Autoimmune Solution cookbook.

and she's launched the Take Back Your Health podcast. And I'm thrilled to say I've been one of her guest. so welcome, Amy. Did I miss anything in your bio?

I don't think so. Sounded great. Thank you. Okay, so let's talk about Sibo. What? What is Sibo? So it is small intestinal bacterial overgrowth. And really most all of our bacteria is sitting in our colon and it's, you know, where we're, it's the end product.

So in our small intestines is where we're digesting and absorbing our food, mostly with our little villi. And there really shouldn't be a lot of bacteria there.

But what can happen through either taking antibiotics, having stress, having a neuromuscular condition that is affecting the innovation of your gut. surgery.

eating a highly processed diet.

What SIBO Is and Why It Happens

what can happen is your digestion can slow down and your food can sit in your small intestine for longer, and then bacteria begin to eat this food and begin to over populate.

It's sort of the situation of too much of a good thing is actually a bad thing. So with this overgrowth of bacteria, you can get a whole host of problems, but one of which is that this food is not really meant to get into your gut.

And it's sitting there for a lot longer. And then having these microbes there can lead to situations such as gas, bloating, skin issues, mood, mind changes, of course various digestive issues and ultimately can lead to leaky gut, which then, as you know, can be a precursor for Alessio Fasano, who really is the forefront leader on intestinal permeability or leaky gut can lead to autoimmune cancer.

A whole host of chronic health conditions. So, let's sort of break this down, for our audience. do you anticipate that, many of these, people who are listening have risk factors that increase the likelihood that they would have Sibo?

Probably. So, you know, I mean, we are a society that is, you know, being born by C-section, a society that as you get a C-section, gets antibiotics, where, you know, children are being thrown antibiotics left and right.

we are eating more processed food. Many people. Are. Oh, hang on, let's let's define processed foods because people may not quite know what a processed food is. Yeah.

so what we think of as not food in its whole form. So when you think about a head of broccoli, you know, that is a whole food in its raw form. when you are talking about a piece of bread, you are it has been processed.

So wheat, if you're eating, you know, wheat as in wheat, bulgur or something that's minimally processed to when you make something into a flour, it becomes way more processed, way more refined.

and then often, you know, if we're eating, cooking, you know, going to the extreme of cookies and cakes, then you're adding in even more process of sugar, you're adding in, potentially seed oils.

you're adding in, you know. Okay. So, so flour based, products are processed. And then you mentioned another term just now, seed oils. what's the seed oil.

Okay. Maybe we want to pause for a second is most of the listeners are they like barebones basic. Should I tune it. So I think we'll have a mix. but let's make it barebones basic okay.

Sure, sure. Everyone can understand. Okay. No problem. So seed oils are things such as, canola, sunflower, corn, soy. You know, much of the, soy and corn that is grown in the world, not just the United States, is actually genetically modified or GMO.

It has, been, altered to resist something called roundup. And in fact, you know, I witnessed this myself when I was in the Peace Corps. I was a peace Corps volunteer in 1995 to 97 and Paraguay.

And they were just coming out with roundup. And I remember the people coming around to the farmers, teaching them that if they planted this new type of seed, that they could plant the seed and then instead of having to go in and hoe by hand the weeds, they could then spray their entire crop with this new, great.

what I want to say, I mean, it's a chemical, but, herbicide called roundup. And, you know, when you're a farmer and you do not have a large farm that is being farmed by, big trucks and machinery, and you have your family, your children out there hoeing by hand.

This sounds really great to you, that you no longer have to go out with a hoe. And maybe your kid can actually go to school instead of hoeing the land.

So this became widely used in South America.

Processed Foods, Seed Oils, and Gut Damage

In fact, I was there probably about five years ago and just driving from south from Paraguay to Brazil, the farms of of, soy and corn that is now genetically modified and being sprayed with roundup, it is everywhere.

And then what they're doing is, you know, soy and corn can be processed into an oil and then it's inexpensive because now you don't have all the manual labor.

Right. And so these oils are now being found in less expensive foods. when you're eating a cookie, when you're eating an Oreo. Look, I don't know the ingredients of Oreos because I haven't eaten an Oreo so many years, but.

So, explain to our listeners why you're alarmed by having roundup in our food supply. Well, there have been a lot of studies showing that roundup, can change our microbiome.

It can, I believe there are studies showing cancer. but the biggest thing is, is that we've seen it change our microbiome and lead to leaky gut and leaky gut.

would you like me to explain to the listeners? Let's let's go over what leaky gut is, okay. Sure. So I like to think of it as a drawbridge. I have this great what I think is great with my hands.

So our gut is normally semi-permeable, meaning that you know, it opens slightly. These are cells. And there's a slight opening in order to absorb our food.

And these are our villi. And so we digest and absorb through our villi and by opening these tight junctions just briefly enough to let in very small molecules or what we call micronutrients, macro micronutrients and this is a normal process that we go through to digest and absorb our food.

If we are, insulted with something like roundup, even eating just wheat that has gluten in it can cause something called iron to be released in the gut, and that then attaches to these tight junctions and causes them to open up bigger and longer.

And that then allows things that were never meant to get into our body or our bloodstream, to get in big molecules such as gluten. Maybe the roundup molecule can now get into our bloodstream.

These cells are only one cell layer thick, and right below it sits nearly 70 to 80% of our immune system. And so as this comes through, our body says, wait a minute, that that shouldn't be here.

What is this molecule? We've never seen this high alert. Let's go attack it. And this is one of the foundations or beliefs of how certain autoimmune conditions can occur when this, say, gluten molecule that's very large and never should be able to get through, the tiny opening comes through.

Our body goes on high alert to attack it. Now there's something called molecular mimicry, which is sort of a case of mistaken identity. This gluten molecule looks very similar to, say, our thyroid tissue.

And so as your immune system, that's sitting right there goes to attack the gluten molecule, it can inadvertently attack your thyroid tissue because they look very, very similar.

And your immune system cannot distinguish them from one another. I'm gonna stop you for just a moment. So everyone who's listening, I want you to hear what we're talking about.

The gluten getting everything revved up. It can attack your genetics, the thyroid, or referrals with their mouse. It can be attacking our brain. and there's mimicry between these molecules and structures in our brain and nervous system.

Now, back to you. Yes. And to sort of make matters worse, in a sense, there's also this molecular mimicry between the gluten molecule and the casein molecule, which is one of the proteins found in dairy, which is why I generally recommend if someone is dealing with autoimmunity, that they give up not only gluten containing foods, but dairy containing foods as well, because there is such a high proportion of people that have, either a sensitivity or have this molecular mimicry with the casein molecule as well.

Amy, one of the questions I get, very commonly is but but I want to have raw dairy I have access to, you know, a safe herd. I really like raw dairy.

Leaky Gut, Autoimmunity, and Molecular Mimicry

What's your opinion about that? So my opinion is the proteins change depending on whether it's raw, frankly, whether it's maybe, in a one or a two cow, whether it's organic, whether it's yogurt, whether you've made it into, cheese, you know, all of these processes can alter the proteins.

And so it really depends on how sensitive you are. And so what I recommended to my patients would be to try each of these things and see how you feel.

I personally never liked milk. I do like cheese. And I'm able to, eat sheep and goat cheese. And that's another one that proteins are similar, but they can be too similar for some people, or they can be different enough for other people.

So I know that I can tolerate goat, not as much, but definitely sheep I can, I can tolerate. And so you really have to see everybody's individual. Luckily, I never really liked milk and so, you know, it's just it's not an experiment that I tried I mean that, you know, eating raw versus not.

But there's certain enzymes that are not being destroyed when you pasteurize the milk. And so there are people that can tolerate it. I mean, just to correct, just like there are people who can go to Europe because their wheat has not been hybridized in the way that ours has, and people can go off to Europe and, and seemingly tolerate, you know, pastries while they're over in Europe now, those of us already diagnosed with autoimmunity, this is not an experiment that I recommend that you try.

I mean that the stakes are just too high, certainly for the average person. That's really not having any issues. But maybe they heard it was healthier, or maybe they know that they have a mild symptom when they eat gluten.

And then, you know, they go to Europe and they can tolerate it. Bravo. Go for it. If you I mean, I have a I had a patient who had a neuromuscular disease.

She had essentially reversed it and then she went to Europe for the summer. She started eating, you know, wheat over there. And she came back and she had a massive flare.

It's just not a risk that I would recommend that people take, unless, again, you're not dealing with autoimmunity. For the listeners, I want you to know that multiple people try to convince me to try goat, sheep, camel milk, or yogurt products, cheeses.

I've tried them. severe flare of my trigeminal neuralgia. And I said, nope, no more of this experimentation. I stay, very, very clean just because I have such intense, really horrific levels of pain if I have those.

So you have to make a decision. What is your symptom? How severe is it? because when you turn it on, we can't guarantee that you can turn it back off.

Right. So and I mean Europe is incredible. I haven't been in I don't know probably eight years but I was in Europe, in Norway eight years ago. And back then the number of gluten free options available, it was even better than the United States.

And you know, of course, on Instagram and Facebook, I see people who travel and are gluten free, and they're talking about all these, you know, treats that they can enjoy.

I know you're not really a treat. Enjoyer or liver is your treat of choice. So, but not all of us are like you, Terry. So, so for those that do want to indulge in something, in my experience, there's incredible options over in Europe.

And so there's just no reason to try to risk it. Okay. So so let's go back to, so people, have risk factors for Sibo. You had mentioned some of the signs and symptoms gas, bloating, flare of your autoimmune disease.

are there other symptoms that you should highlight for us? Yeah. I mean, the typical one that I. That sort of classic is my stomach was flat in the morning, and then I had breakfast or had lunch, and then I looked six months pregnant or you just get this real distension.

I mean, it's bloating kind of to an extreme. Now many people get diarrhea. I personally have had Sibo, I got constipation and I had a number of patients.

So classically when you read about Sibo, diarrhea is what you read. But I want your listeners to know that constipation. I saw that probably as much as I did diarrhea with patients.

So, constipation, another one that people don't really associate.

SIBO Symptoms and How It Is Diagnosed

But I see a huge correlation is rosacea. you know, rosacea. And it's very interesting because a while back they had a lot of commercials about treating that, I don't know, must have been big.

Well, I don't really watch TV to no commercials anymore, but they had an antibiotic treating it. And then, you know, people were sort of getting better.

And that makes sense. You know, with, with the Sibo that you would take an antibiotic and sort of get better and of course we can get into treatments.

Let's go ahead and get it to treat. So yeah, I'm trying to think if there were any other kind of classic symptoms of Sibo, I think the bloating is the biggest and then it can be constipation.

It can be diarrhea. and then, rosacea is another big one. And well, so people think, yeah, I think I've got it. What do I do now? Yeah. So, do you want to get into treatment or you want to get into testing for it?

Yeah. I suppose we should diagnose it first and then we're okay. Okay. So the, you know, GI doctors are getting better at recognizing this because there is a drug to treat it.

So we'll get into that. So, you know, it's kind of interesting when there's no drug to treat something then then doctors aren't really interested in diagnosing things.

Right. Because the drug reps not coming by. So I found from the beginning of the start of my practice to the end of my practice, that I really saw an uptick in the number of people actually being able to go to their GI doctor and get a diagnosis.

So the standard is a Sibo breath test or a hydrogen methane breath test. And what this is doing is measuring these gases in your breath, because these bacteria give off these gases as they're sitting there eating the food that's resting in your small bowel, they give off more gas.

If there's no food in there for them to eat, then they don't have as much gas to give off. So that is the gold standard is, hydrogen methane breath test.

You can get this through your regular GI doctor. Many functional medicine doctors also, you know, have a kit and they're able to, you know, order this test for you.

Another test that I would use if you were not able to get that in my clinic was something called an organics test, which is a test that through a functional medicine lab.

But it is looking in your urine at metabolites from bacteria, fungi, various things in your small intestines. And if you can't get either of those, I mean, maybe we can give you the link for your listeners.

I have a quiz in all of my books and also on my website that just sort of asks you a bunch of questions, you know, have you had any biotics? Do you have bloating?

You know, and it gives you a likelihood as to whether you have Sibo or not. And I find this, you know. That's super hard for. Many, many people. I mean, hundreds of thousands around the world have taken these quizzes and then since treated so the treatment for Sibo, I call it a three step program.

The first is you want to obviously stop whatever the insult is. If you're eating this, carb heavy, heavily processed diet, you know, stopping that. So you want to stop adding fuel to this fire if you're on antibiotics and it's not, you know, for anything life threatening and you're able to get off these antibiotics, whatever your stress, you know, whatever has gotten you in this boat, if you're able to stop that and then you want to do something to sort of prune, kill off or prune back this bacteria, it's it's not that you don't want any, but you just have this overgrowth of, frankly, good bacteria.

So the standard protocol is, is a is a antibiotic called Z. Faxon. And I did use this in my clinic. It's one of the only antibiotics that I ever wrote for.

And it's very simple. Could you repeat that again? So in this listen.

SIBO Treatment, Diet, and Probiotics

Z. Faxon x I f a x I n. So it's an antibiotic that's very specific to the gut. And so whenever you're treating something in medicine, we always want to be as specific as possible.

You know when you take these types of antibiotics that are nonspecific, it means it can just, you know, kill the bacteria everywhere. So this is a bit more specific to your gut.

The problem is, is that at least when I stopped practicing a few years ago, it was very expensive and insurance, it was very difficult to get it covered.

I don't know where that stands now. but back then it was very, very expensive. I'm talking in the thousands of dollars, and it, often was not covered by insurance.

So I then formulated a product of an herbal formula that is very good at treating Sibo, because I needed something for my patients. You know, there were these very rare.

I mean, occasionally I got a patient that was just so fed up and so exhausted from these symptoms that, you know, they doled out the eight, $9,000, whatever they needed to do.

But that's rare. Most people don't. You know, even if you have $1,000, the last thing you want to spend it on is some animal products. And so, you know, I created a supplement that, I call it microbe clear.

And it's a mix of wormwood, black walnut, berberine. It's, it helps to just prune back or to get rid of some of this bacteria. And so we want to first get on a lower carb diet.

We want to get out the processed food if you're, you know, have other risk factors, get rid of those. You then want to take something to kind of prune back this bacteria.

And then you want to take a probiotic. Now this is, as I said before, a too much of a good thing is a bad thing. So many, many probiotics, including many of the probiotics on my website, have lactobacillus in it.

So one of the main bacteria in our gut, and with Sibo, the overgrowth of bacteria is often lactobacillus. So you do not want to be taking a probiotic that has lactobacillus in it because you're just adding fuel to that fire.

So again for this reason, you know, I've created a soil based probiotic that I use very specifically for people who have Sibo. It does not contain lactobacillus.

So I mean, certainly you could look at other probiotics, but the vast, vast majority of certainly multi strain probiotics out there on the market have some lactobacillus in it.

So if you take anything from this talk, if you're heading out to get some probiotics because you think you have Sibo, do not get one that has lactobacillus in it.

it's one of the ways, I guess back to, you know, how do you know if you have Sibo, one of the ways you can tell that you have Sibo, or certainly an imbalance, is if you start eating a lot of yogurt, maybe you're eating, you're drinking kombucha, you're eating a lot of fermented foods, and suddenly, you know, you're having this distension.

You either have pain, you get bloating. That often tells me that you also have Sibo in there, because these are all generally good foods to feed and repopulate your gut.

Where to Find Amy Myers and Closing Remarks

So if you already have an overpopulation and then you're adding more prebiotics or food for your bacteria and you get these symptoms, it often tells me that perhaps you already have an overgrowth.

So I'm an advocate of not eating fermented foods. while you're dealing with Sibo and wait till you've pruned back all that bacteria, you've gotten your microbiome in a good state, and then you want to maintain a healthy state and maintain those bacteria.

Then you can add in the prebiotic fibers the, you know, the kimchi, the kefir, the, the sauerkraut, the kombucha, the, you know, all of the things that I know that you're an advocate of, you can add those back in.

Amy, this is wonderful. Always love our, conversations. They are so, so, so helpful and empowering for everyone who's listening. And again, for people with M. S.

in their immune conditions, Sibo certainly can be a part of your health challenge. Now, Amy, can you tell us where people can find you? Sure. So, my website is amymyersmd.com My company has. Oh, hang on, people.

why do you spell your name again? Oh, sure. A M Y M Y E R S.com And, my company is Amy Myers, M. D., and my company has its own socials. And then I myself have, socials @dramymyers And then, of course, Take Back Your Health is my new podcast, so you can listen to it wherever you listen to your favorite podcasts.

This is wonderful. And, I so appreciate all that you have been doing to empower people, to give them skills and products to help support their healing journey.

Thanks so much, Terry. I really appreciate it and I wish health and healing to all the listeners out there.