Most of them have some connection to the digestive tract, even if they're not considered a digestive autoimmunity. because your immune system is everywhere and your digestive system has its own immune systems that gets confused.

But when it comes to gut permeability, so the term, you know, to say or think of, leaky gut. Welcome to Health Breakthroughs with Dr. Stengler. I'm Dr Mark Stegler and each episode we cut through the noise to bring you practical, science-backed insights for more energy, better health, and a life that feels like yours again.

Hey everybody, great to be with you. I have my friend Dr. Paul Anderson with us. So I like to refer to him as the professor. Hope he doesn't mind that, but anyways, he has been a professor and I've known Paul for a long time.

We actually were in school together. Boy, we're hitting Paul. It's been a little, little while, but we've stayed in touch and we'll work together on some projects, including a book called Outside the Box Cancer Therapies.

And Paul's written other books. By the way, I recommend you go to his website. It Dr. A, A like an Anderson, dranow.com and there you can get more information on integrative medicine, holistic treatments, all the good things that he's up to as many, many podcasts and videos you watch as well.

So Dr. Anderson, today's a very big topic because we're talking about gut health related to autoimmunity. And you teach doctors about this subject. For the lay person out there, can you maybe give us your thoughts on the intricacies of the digestive tract?

And then we'll get into how that connects to the immune system and where the new system is balanced or not. Sure. Well, thanks Dr. Stangler for having me on first.

And yes, we we've been around a long time now. That's it's good. We're still here. So, you know, I think that when it comes to. GI tract. Unless you've maybe taken an anatomy course or physiology or something, it's easy to kind of underestimate how complicated our digestive system is.

It's really an amazing group of organs that all work together to make sure that we digest and absorb the nutrients from our food. And I always like to talk to patients about it.

Really a well orchestrated system that has a lot of feedback. So what we do when we chew or digest on the front end, and then when the stomach takes over and the small intestine, et cetera, everybody's got a different job.

And one of the things that happens is either because of stressors or some diseases or potentially just not even eating properly, we can confuse that orchestration in the digestive system.

And so you think, well, I could put the same food in my mouth and it goes through the system, but if it's not, say, chewed properly or if the stomach's is not doing its job properly the nutrients I get may be completely different downstream.

So, I always like to start there with, you know, we eat, of course, every day. We think about eating, but we don't think how amazingly well connected and orchestrated just getting that food digested is, okay?

So that really, and the reason I start either by our own actions, maybe by eating things that we shouldn't or eating too quickly or not eating enough or eat too much, we can throw the whole system off just to start with.

But also there's certain disorders that will, say, slow down the production of different things in different places. We've got acid in our stomach and enzymes in the small intestine, etc.

Those can all be thrown off too. And I think thinking of that as a base is important when we take the leap to immunity. Because people will say, well, I get it, food we eat and we're trying to get nutrients out of the food to go in our blood and feed the cells.

That makes sense. Why an immune connection with my digestive system? Well, if we think about all that orchestration of getting the food through and everything.

The first part is just a real sort of simple obvious part of immune function, which is really your digestive system is the place that interacts with the outside world the most outside of your skin.

And that means we take food from the inside world and we eat it, put it inside of our body. So if we didn't have a digestive immune system, we may actually have more inappropriate bacteria or parasites or other things that, you know, would probably not be compatible with life.

So thankfully among all this orchestration we have of digestion, we also have different immune functions all along the way through, all the from the mouth, through the colon.

So there's the obvious immune system, which is let's not let the food we eat become an infectious problem, let say, or something like that. So each little section has its own sort of anti-infective.

For example, one of the things that the stomach does with the acid is actually antibacterial. Now, not all bacteria die in acid, but many do. Some of them enzymatic activities, antibactyria.

A lot of mucous membrane activities very anti infected. So then if you take, well, okay, so let's not let the food do us in, you know, through an immune problem.

We must have a lot of immune cells, little pieces of the immune system that go through the whole digestive tract. And indeed, that's true. So, one of the things then if we go to the next step and we agree it's orchestrated and it has some immune function and also agree that through disease or maybe just eating things we shouldn't or eating too quickly, etc., we can throw all that off.

Well, that can through the immune system off and the digestive system as well. When I have patients, especially people with chronic digestive complaints or maybe an autoimmune digestive condition, et cetera, we'll talk a lot about that and how we can undo the damage that has happened.

But sometimes it takes a little more effort to undo damage because the immune system gets a bit confused the longer it's not operating properly. That can lead to a number of avenues where the immune system can become confused.

One is the mucous membranes. They have a lot of immune proteins, immunoglobulins in them. Those can get out of balance. We've all heard of the good bacteria or good flora.

Well, that's very responsive to your diet. Your good Flora and your Diet are directly related, not just in how the bacteria come in you, but they actually eat as well.

So good flora eat different things than what we might call bad flore. The floro balance is huge. Then if we've been sick a long time, we can develop what used to call resistance factors.

Nowadays, most people know them as biofilms, which are normal to all life basically. But if you're sick, like your good bacteria, bad bacteria go out of balance, if you're sick a long time, your normal biofilm reservoir becomes pathological and it holds the wrong organisms together.

So there's a lot of avenues through which the immune system can either be strengthened or weakened through our digestive system. You've done everything you were told to do and something still feels off.

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Absolutely. And we're going to talk more about that. Maybe for the viewers out there, tell me a bit more, about really what's going on with autoimmunity, just from a kind of basic overview, if you would.

Yeah, auto immunity, which is, you know, I think you and I, probably one of the more common reasons we see people with chronic digestive problems, that are certainly not functional would be autoimmune digestive conditions.

It is self-descriptive in that it's an immune reaction against you, so auto immune. People say, well, that doesn't make any sense because our immune system is supposed to know who we are and who the bad guys are, which is true.

That can become a bit confused. There's a number of ways that the confusion happens, but to keep it simple, If you have something that gets to your cells, and let's say it's a cell in your colon or maybe the connective tissue type cells that hold all of your digestive tract together, anything important.

And then that cell has something get to it that is not part of you original makeup, not original equipment for that The immune system often see that cell and go and say, well, there's something wrong with the cell.

So we're going to clean it up. We're gonna take that sell away, which we do all the time. The problem that'll happen is if it's. Something that actually gets inside the sell.

The immune system might get confused and while it's making a memory against the bad guy, it makes a member against a piece of your colon cell or a small intestine cell, or connected tissue.

And now you've got your immune systems kind of attacking those cells constantly. The common things are, so you think, well, what would get inside of a cell?

Well, viruses get into cells. All the toxins you can think of, whether they're chemical or metal or even, you know, mycotoxins or fungal toxins, et cetera, all of those things go into the cell.

So a lot of times we see these things at the very beginning of autoimmunity. And there's other reasons for it as well. But it's really an insidious process usually, it doesn't come on immediately.

In most cases, and I'm sure you've had this when you really take a long history on autoimmune digestive patient, they'll often say, well, my whole life I've have stomach problems, I have had digestive issues, but they got better and then they get worse and all this.

Well, usually what that means is maybe 10, 15 years before they were diagnosed with something like Crohn's or colitis or something. Those diseases that are autoimmune, their body was working up to it, probably through this mechanism of your body getting confused and attacking itself.

There's so many auto immune diseases. You think of things like auto-immune thyroiditis, known as Hashimoto's thyroiditus, when the immune system attacks the thyroid tissue, the number one cause of low thyroid.

People in America around the world do have people familiar with rheumatoid arthritis, for example, Sjogren's syndrome, which can affect the saliva, your energy levels, and your joints.

I mean, there's over hundreds of autoimmune diseases, of course. But from a holistic perspective, we always, at least in part, are addressing the digestive system.

Talk a bit more about that perhaps with, let's start with the connection with leaky gut syndrome, and then we'll get into the microbiome if that's okay.

Sure. Yeah, as you mentioned, there's many, many types of autoimmunity. Most of them have some connection to the digestive tract, even if they're not considered a digestive auto-immunity.

because your immune system is everywhere and your digestive system has its own immune systems that gets confused. But when it comes to gut permeability, so the term to say or think of leaky gut, to some people it sounds like, ooh, that doesn't sound good.

Well, it's really not good, And to other people, I say, well, there's no such thing as that. But if you look in the literature around digestive function, but also pathology, they very much recognize GI permeability changes that come because of immune attack.

And so the term leaky gets more of a broad term to say something that is supposed to keep the cells together usually. is attacking the parts that keep the cells together, and I might now absorb things I never was intended to absorb.

So let's say, for example, keep it as simple as possible in your small intestine where your proteins go. You eat some protein, your intestine and all the other apparatus, stomach, etc., break it down to amino acids.

And then the cells, actually, if you get down to two or three amino acids, your cells actually have enzymes inside that'll break them into individuals and put them in your blood.

Perfect. Works great. If you start to get a breakdown between those wonderful cells that do all the digesting and absorbing activity, what will happen then is that some of them will have gaps between them.

And so a protein or a big polypeptide that's much more than three amino acids will slip its way into the bloodstream. And now you have big either partial proteins or whole proteins from your food, and those are in your blood.

Well, your circulating immune system has no idea why this is in And so as that goes in, you can start to develop sensitivity or allergic reactions against those foods, which really, like any other allergy, it's a misdirected immune response.

So developing reactions and inflammatory responses to foods you otherwise should be able to eat is a big part of the leaky gut syndrome. It creates then a lot of inflammation because if you imagine, so you think of your gut cells and everything, on the food digestive side we've got immune cells, and then on blood side, we have immune If we now have these foods or sensitize to, every time we eat them, we're going to have more inflammation, which is just part of your immune response.

Leaky gut can lead us to that very easily and proteins are easy example of that. Certainly, there's other things that can go through. People will say, well, how in the world does that break down?

Well, the things we talked about earlier, Yes, it's often an autoimmune reaction against those little connective tissue bridges that hold you together, but also inappropriate amounts of the wrong bacteria or viruses in the GI tract can trigger it.

The biofilms at worse stages can figure it, and then just eating foods that are very inflammatory for us, which can be a big problem. Another thing, because of course we eat almost everybody eats every day at least once, right?

So we kind of don't think about eating, but if we consider that the food is the number one route into the body for things like bacteria and stuff, it's also the one we're out in for toxic material.

And a lot of food is grown in not the cleanest situation. So you might eat an apple, but that apple may have some

pesticide or herbicide. Those things break down and create this leaky gut sort of loop that you get into.

can break down. The good thing is the gut is made to repair itself because it's a high traffic area. We're eating all the time. So the only positive silver lining is your gut can regenerate most of the tissues in your got on about a 12 plus week cycle.

Doesn't mean you get better in 12 weeks always, but we can work to undo the problems. And then your guy can kind of try and go back to its normal state, which is.

Hey everybody, I want to take just a quick moment and invite you to my website drstengler.com. Here we have the supplements that we've been using with our patients for many, many years.

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Right, so basically, if you're not putting things in which harm the gut, you are putting in things which create healing in the guts. Like you said, it is a type of tissue, thankfully, that can regenerate itself.

So you get the right environment, and you can heal up an increased intestinal permeability. You know, when people have conditions, say like rheumatoid arthritis, for example, obviously different joints are affected.

We've talked about the proteins, we won't go into this in a whole lot, but There are certain types of parts of bacteria cell walls that can get into the bloodstream called LPS, lipopolysaccharides.

And then they have this fancy term called translocation, which basically is a fancy way of saying These components of bacteria cell walls, which shouldn't absorb into the bloodstream, do go to different parts of the body, say like the joints.

Your immune system, like it should, sees them as foreign invaders, creates an inflammatory response. At the root of that, we know in the literature, a lot of people develop leaky gut from chronic use of pain medicines, the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, and so forth to talk.

Talk to us about the common medications you find set people up for leakey gut. Yeah, certainly. When you think of the things that could insult your digestive system and then create this, you know, permeability problem, like you got toxins we mentioned and, inappropriate foods and all that, but then we often don't think, I said we don´t often think about what we're eating.

We often remember, well, i'm taking this medication. because maybe it's over-the-counter like a non-steroidal antideprofen or something or acetaminophen as a different type of over the counter or cold medicine or whatever.

Or maybe you're prescribed something you don't realize it has a big effect on your digestive system. Each of the types of medications, but since you brought up pain medicine is certainly the most common thing I think probably purchased over that counter.

The different types of pain medicine have different effects on the way our digestive system either maintains itself or has good feedback. So nonsteroidal drugs, so the aspirin and all those other types non-stereo and inflammatory, you hurt yourself, take that and makes the pain less.

Well, a couple of things about that. One is it does it by blocking a particular part of our inflammatory cascade. And so most people, if they're sensitive, know this, but a lot of people don't.

Non-steroidal and inflammatory are associated with more gastritis and ulcers, so stomach problems, literal stomach problem. Well, they do that because to make the acid in your stomach, which you need, and then to the protective lining, you this cascade that comes out that's part of the inflammatory response that helps to maintain.

If I block that, then suddenly I've got acid no protection or little protection and now I'm burning myself, you know. Now, there are people, like I am one of these people.

I can't take non-steroidal drugs because I will get gastritis and then an ulcer very, very quickly. Other people don't notice it as much, but it's going on.

Take another example, another very commonly used over-the-counter acetaminophen for pain. It's not a non-steroidal, it works differently, more in your brain.

But what is now becoming more popularized, I've noticed there's a lot more posts about it on social media anyway, is acetominophan, which you and I have known forever, but It goes into a particular part of our liver to be metabolized and a really important part in the balance of the body called glutathione, sort of one of big antioxidants, is used up very quickly to metabolize the acetaminophen away.

And so you think, well, okay, the liver is set up that way and the other cells that metabolize, what's wrong with that? Well, it's not that there's something wrong, but it is just that acetaminophen is a fairly new invention by humans.

And glutathione has been with us as long as we've been human. So if I'm burning up the glutothione reserves, I have less and less of the main antioxidant that works with vitamin C and vitamin E.

So then people will think, well, that doesn't sound so good, but it's an antioxidant. What does that do? Well, newer research, which means 10, 15 years at this point, more and more research shows that when you look at the immune cells going out of balance towards, say, autoimmunity and then more likely to attack you, one of the early triggers is if you drop your vitamin C or your glutathione levels, Those immune cells lose their regulation and so they might be more likely to attack you.

Or let's say you already have some, you mentioned rheumatoid arthritis or lupus or something. Glutathione levels go down or vitamin C and glutathionine drop down.

The T cell balance that maybe was just on the edge now your lupus or your rheumatoid arthritis now, those T cells go into the fighting mode and they might go harder in attacking whatever the tissue is.

A lot of that's in the gut, all those tissues. And you could bring up, there's thousands of drugs, so each one does it a different way. But medications, because people don't think, oh gosh, I take this for my knee pain.

They don' think that might hurt my gut or it might her my kidneys or some other part. because obviously that's not how it's advertised. It might cause trouble elsewhere.

There it is advertised to help you with your pain. I think you and I see people every day and there might be two, three, four, five things that are not helping the GI tract or the immune system and they don't even know it, they didn't connect it.

Yeah, very, true. Well, maybe in this last part, could you just give some of the gold nuggets that you've found, seeing tens of thousands of patients, advising doctors, Obviously, we have a lot of tools in naturopathic medicine to help people with autoimmune conditions, and part of that's targeted at healing up their gut health, improving their health.

We're some of the gold nuggets, you would say, in terms of helping people, with their good health and then that helps their autoimmunity. And what kind of time period are you looking at?

Yeah, I think that is a great place to end up. What I will tell people, especially about GI tract health, so that'll relate them to other, you know, interventions like diet and things.

But I always tell them that that's something, regardless of what else we do, say, with autoimmunity, your gut health

is something we have to continually work on because it doesn't heal overnight.

And if we don't clean up what goes into your digestive system and we do not clean-up maybe the immune response to those things, we're just sort of letting that system stay dysfunctional even if may work on other things to help you.

The other side of it is that the more we do that is good to take away these things that start to break your system down in the gut, inflame it, all of that stuff.

The more of we remove from you, the faster your gut will heal because it really is made to heal. Now, if somebody has a short-term problem, they just started to get troubles I will always tell them, we'll start with the basics, which is let's remove anything from your diet that's toxic or inflammatory or maybe just foods you shouldn't eat or you react badly to.

Let's just get the junk out first, right? And again, that is lots of things, reading labels and not eating fake food and all that. So let's get the junk out first.

Let's maybe do some baseline healing things. So in, in our world, and the botanical medicine world we use a demulcent herbs like, uh, you know, slippery alum, those sort of herbs really helpful.

And I usually tell people at the beginning, let us do three things one. We'll use an herb to help kind of protect that would be a demolition. We'll use a probiotic to just kind of refeed the good bacteria in.

And then we'll do something to feed the cells, which could be something like glutamine or zinc harnessing, you know, those sort of things. So that way we've got three kind points of healing because it's great to take the bad guys away.

But also, you've got to heal it up. I always tell them, look, if you skin your knuckles, and then you go out every day and you hit them on the ground again, they're never going to heel, right?

So we want to stop you from skinning them and we wanna bandage them up for a while so they don't heel. So the spectrum, though, is quite wide. If we get somebody who's younger, healthier, just started down the trail of kind of some bad digestive things, maybe they already have a little autoimmunity, It's a project of three to six months of kind of turning the ship around and then it's maintenance, lifestyle maintenance.

You get somebody which we've all had, they finally find us and they want an alternative integrative approach, but they've had autoimmunity for 35 years.

There it's more, I'll tell them it is a little more like a glacier. We're going to be just working on this slow and steady in the beginning and you're gonna improve probably every three to six months, but it'd be in baby steps in beginning.

And then what happens is once you take the junk out, you get the healing going, then we work on the broader immune system. then they start to heal in bigger steps, you know, once you get past that.

But it does depend quite a bit on how long they've been ill and how much healing we're trying to work on. Absolutely. So maybe in your last just analysis here, for the viewers who have an autoimmune disease or a family member or loved one, how imperative is it that they work approach to their autoimmune condition.

I mean, I know it can vary depending on the person, but I think from our perspective, it's always, you know, got to be part of the equation, maybe comment a bit more on that with your experience.

Yeah. It's 100% of people really with any auto immune issue. Because even if you're just reductionistic about it and say, you know, You've got triggers through your diet and your flora in your digestive system, and then you've Got a whole immune system living in Your digestive System.

Both of those will trigger your autoimmunity all on their own, let alone all these other things. So I think digestive repair, and being mindful of putting the good things in so that our natural repair abilities get turned on, but also the removal process of junk.

I think 100% of people with autoimmune imbalance, they need that because let's say it's a percentage of your problem, which it always is. Even if we work on all the other parts of the body and autoimmune response there, if don't have the gut come back online as it should, it's like a hole in the bucket that's never going to stop draining.

So I think it is 100% for all chronic illnesses, especially auto-immune. Okay, very good. Well, thank you, Dr. Anderson. Thank you so much for your time, your knowledge, and again, DrAnow.com and you've got a lot of podcasts I know which address autoimmunity.health.

So certainly people can learn this subject even more in depth from your perspective. Certainly. Thank you very much. Thanks for listening to Health Breakthroughs with Dr.

Stengler. If today's episode resonated with you, please follow the show, share with someone who needs it, and leave a review. It helps more people find us.

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