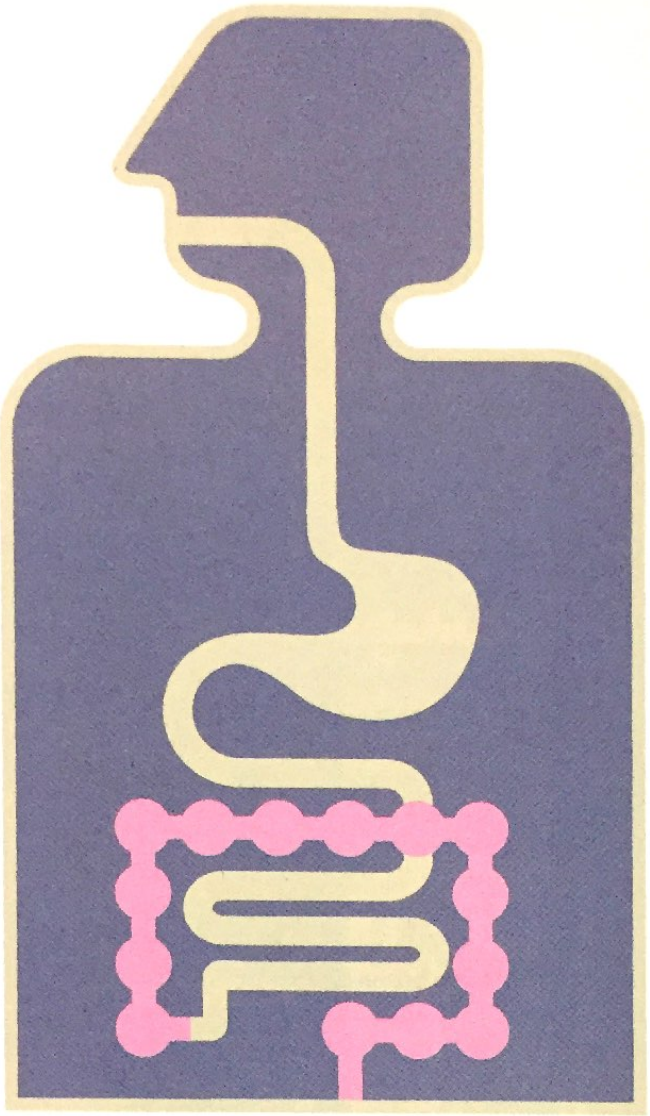

Illustration by Jessi Gray

Go with the Gut

Finding Optimum Health Through Digestion

By Julie Lancaster

Health gurus bombard with advice to eat less fried food and more greens. They tell people to live stress-free and they sneer at anyone who drinks caffeine or looks twice at trans-fats. The human body serves as a vessel to carry us through life, and if it suffers from bad eating, as does the will to get out of bed.

But, in recent years, medical practitioners and healthy living enthusiasts are encouraging people to take a new look by examining the inner-workings of our gut. Dr. Mary Poore, physician and co-founder of Flagstaff Clinic of Naturopathic Medicine, explains that compromised digestive health can lead to inflammatory conditions, autoimmune diseases, allergies, reduced absorption of vital nutrients, increased absorption of toxins and internal growth of disease causing bacteria and yeast.

She "treats the gut" for people with these conditions as well as skin ailments and immune system weakness. The digestive system from start to finish includes organs in the gut and beyond: mouth, esophagus, stomach, small intestines, large intestines and rectum.

If the digestive system is not operating optimally, the body will not receive the full benefits of what is put into it. Phyllis Hogan, herbalist and proprietress of Winter Sun Trading Company, professes "the saying is 'you are what you eat' but should be 'you are what you can digest and absorb.'"

"The saying is 'you are what you eat' but should be 'you are what you can digest and absorb.'"

—Phyllis Hogan

DIGESTIVE INTEGRITY

Eating better should include something alive. Raw, uncooked, unprocessed food has enzymes that assist our bodies with absorption and digestion. With each meal, one can take a look at the plate. Is anything raw, that being plant and not animal? If not, grab a carrot or some almonds (and not the dry roasted or candy coated kind either). The more raw fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds consumed, the better. The sterilization process of canning and the heating process of cooking kills enzymes.

Another tip is to eat plants with envious amounts of enzymes. In the enzyme world, all fruits and vegetables are not created equally. Enzyme powerhouses include pineapples, papayas, bananas, apples, peaches, cucumbers, sprouts, avocados, lemons, onions, artichokes, root vegetables and tomatoes.

Still, it can be important to get some help sometimes. One of many commercially available digestive enzymes, including Beano, may be purchased over the counter. Enzymes found in food and the digestive tract break down food particles and convert them into absorbable nutrients. But at times, many people eat more processed food than they should — from doughnuts to pretzels to Cheez Whiz. They also eat a greater quantity of food than necessary (Thanksgiving dinner ring a bell?). Or they eat an imbalanced meal (a whole box of Girl Scout cookies). That's when digestive enzymes from a bottle become a new best friend.

TEA, SPICE AND WATER

It helps to visit the spice rack. Worldwide, herbs have been used for centuries to support digestion. The spices topping the list as digestive helpers include ginger, cardamom, fennel, thyme, oregano, garlic and peppermint. If you experience flatulence, constipation, bloating, irritable bowel syndrome or diarrhea, you may want to consider buying these herbs in bulk. In connection with the herbs, an herbal tea can really help.

The other helper in the realm of digestion is the purity of water. Staying hydrated becomes important. Years ago, I attended a yoga retreat in the green hills of Pennsylvania. One yogi touted that he drank two quarts of water each morning. After attempting to emulate his disciplined ways, I gave up after the first try, as I then spent the rest of the morning excusing myself from my yoga mat.

An estimated 35 million Americans wear dentures. Many use denture creams like Fixodent or PoliGrip to help ill fitting dentures and partial dentures stay in place. These creams contain high levels of Zinc and have been positively linked to serious and often debilitating permanent neurologic injuries. Common symptoms of zinc poisoning include: **paralysis, numbness, tingling of hands or feet, muscle weakness of arms or legs, loss of sensation or balance, unexpected pain or weakness, difficulty walking or gait changes, wheelchair confinement.**

If you or a loved one has been suffering from any of these symptoms and has been using denture adhesives it is recommended you seek medical attention to be evaluated for zinc poisoning.

Excessive zinc can purge the body of copper, a chemical needed for normal brain and nervous system functioning. A copper deficiency can cause anemia, weakness and numbness in arms and legs, loss of balance, difficulty in walking and eventually permanent paralysis.

Compensation may be available through a claim against the manufactures of PoliGrip and Fixodent as a result of their failure to warn consumers concerning the dangers of zinc toxicity and resulting neurologic injury. Contact 1-888-644-3578 for more information on making a claim.

Improper fitting dentures are the reason people use denture adhesives. Conventional dentures made today are very similar to the dentures George Washington wore. The materials used are different, but the design has not changed much. The outdated methods of making a conventional denture are the reason for uncomfortable and poor fitting dentures.

Customized dentures made correctly do not require the use of a denture adhesive. One of the best denture system's available today is called Geneva 2000. This is the only denture that offers male and female teeth. These teeth are hand crafted in Switzerland under strict safety guidelines using fourteen layers of porcelain for a stunning life like appearance. The appearance can be like the teeth you once had or create a whole new look. The denture itself is made in America at a Geneva 2000 certified laboratory. (Most dentures are made in China at unregulated labs) Hershberger Dental Lab in Glendale AZ is a certified Geneva 2000 laboratory. The teeth and biting plain are set differently than natural teeth or conventional dentures. This prevents the rocking and lifting that happens with most dentures. Cutting bars are added to the back teeth of the denture to allow the wearer to chew and grind foods like meat, fruits and vegetables.

Mini implants offer additional stabilization of upper or lower dentures. Mini implants used with dentures cost far less than traditional implants used in restoring natural teeth. IMTEK, (a 3M Company) designs mini implants for Geneva 2000 dentures. The company advises patients to seek care with an IMTEK mini implant certified dentist. Mini implants placed by uncertified doctors are more prone to failures. IMTEK and Geneva 2000 have intergradedtheir designs to insure you the most comfortable and secure fit. A secure fit allows denture wearers to eat healthy foods, improving their overall health. Socrates said "Let your food be your medicine and medicine be your food". Eat anywhere, with anyone, most anything!

Secure fitting dentures allows patients confidence is social settings. No more dentures falling out when they sneeze, cough, sing or laugh.

"I'm so thankful for how much mini implants have improved the quality of my life. Everyone should consider doing this if they wear dentures. It's so simple." Nadine L.

Call for your complimentary consultation! 928-226-7654

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We are excited to announce that orthodontists Dr. Eric Peterson (left) and Dr. Robert Caskey (center), in addition to their current practice, will be caring for the patients of Dr. Mike McFadden (right) as Dr. McFadden retires from practicing in Flagstaff. Dr. Caskey and Dr. Peterson will continue their partnership of Northern Arizona Orthodontics, LLC. They look forward to this new chapter and consider it a blessing to care for the residents of Flagstaff and the surrounding communities. Dr. McFadden offers his sincere thanks to all those who have shown him and his family kindness and support throughout the years.

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However, hydration within reason is imperative. Dr. Jim Sears, renowned pediatrician, suggests having a few glasses of water before breakfast to "help your body begin the day in biochemical balance." When hydrating, he suggests drinking room temperature beverages, as icy ones slow digestion.

NATURE'S PHARMACY

When suffering from indigestion after a meal, a teaspoon full of fennel seeds, with the taste of licorice, can help. Many Indian restaurants provide fennel seeds post-meal for just this reason. Also, healthy bacteria known as probiotics are becoming a household word, gaining recognition with products like Dannon's Activia.

Probiotics, live microorganism and "friendly bacteria," are found naturally in foods like yogurt and miso and are sold in stronger doses in powder and capsule form. Ahdona Holland, supplements clerk at New Frontiers Natural Marketplace, encourages all diets to incorporate probiotics to rebalance intestinal flora. Some evidence suggests that probiotics might help overcome diarrhea (especially after antibiotics), eczema in children, yeast and urinary tract infections, irritable bowel syndrome and intestinal infection.

If eating and supplement tips are not enough, exercise serves as one of the great digestive aids. Physical activity speeds up the flow of food through the digestive tract which stimulates the muscles in the intestine to process food more quickly. It becomes a workout for the gut.

While not every digestive tract is built the same, examining the possibilities, consulting a physician and looking into the possibilities of a new diet — not to lose weight, but to feel better and live healthier — could really hit the spot.