

Healthy Digestion

The 5 “R’s”: Remove. Replace. Reinoculate. Repair. Rebalance.



The 5 “R’s” of Healthy Digestion

1. REMOVE

This step is all about removing the stressors that negatively affect the environment of your GI tract. This includes all allergenic foods and chemical irritants. If you're unsure of which foods you may be sensitive to it can be helpful to remove the most common ones such as: wheat, cow's milk, soy, peanuts/legumes, corn, eggs and all grains. Other irritants can include chemicals found in processed foods (i.e. artificial colors, sweeteners, and preservatives), alcohol, and coffee.

This step also involves eradicating pathogenic bugs such as bacteria, yeasts, or parasites that may be hanging out in your gut (more on this in step 3). And depending on your symptoms it may make sense to eliminate all sugar for a period of time (even natural ones like raw honey and fruit), which is the food source for these organisms. One type of yeast called Candida Albicans can be particularly problematic, and when out of control can manifest as any number of symptoms including bloating, abdominal discomfort, bladder infections, depression, headaches, mental fog, and vaginal infections. In addition to starving these organisms by removing their food source, you can also fight them with certain anti-fungal herbs and supplements as prescribed by your provider. Emotional stress can also have devastating effects on your GI tract and can't be overlooked!



Your lifestyle habits have enormous influence on your digestive system and health including stress management, sleep, exercise and relationship.

synergee4life.com
synergeesuccess@yahoo.com



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2. REPLACE

This step refers to adding back or replacing all those factors, that may be missing or lacking in the body and diet as a result of medications, various diseases, or aging. In order to digest our food properly we need sufficient amounts of enzymes, Hydrochloric Acid (HCL), and bile acids. You can think of this step as doing everything you can to support your digestion – and it will vary from person to person.

3. REINOCULATE

Our intestinal tracts are host to over 500 different types of bacteria. In fact you might be surprised to know that you have more bacteria in your gut than cells in your body! In a healthy gut there should be a ratio of about 80:20 “good bacteria to bad bacteria”, but due to poor diets, overuse of antibiotics and medications, environmental stress, diminished soil integrity, among other factors, most people have the opposite ratio with the “good guys” being outnumbered by the “bad guys” mentioned in step 1. This step involves replenishing the gut with healthy flora through the use of supplemental probiotics as well as through dietary changes that feed or fuel healthy bacterial growth. Supplementing with a good quality probiotic is especially important during and after antibiotic treatment.

4. REPAIR

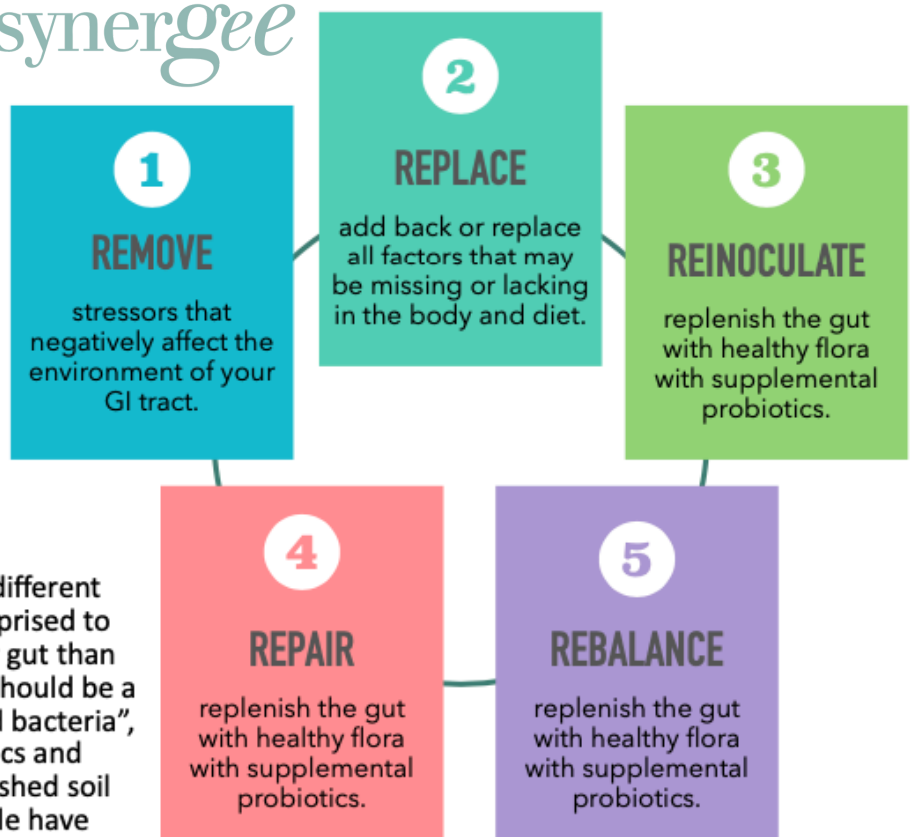
Once your diet is in check and stressors eliminated (or at least limited), you can begin to repair the damage done and work at regenerating the mucosal lining of the digestive tract with specific nutrients. Over time, the lining of the intestinal tract becomes damaged due to all the irritants and stressors mentioned in step 1. As the integrity of the lining is lost, a condition called Leaky Gut Syndrome can ensue where the intestinal lining becomes permeable allowing substances such as large undigested food particles, pathogenic organisms and other chemicals to pass or “leak” through the barrier and into the blood stream at large. These substances are recognized as “foreign invaders” to the body and can end up triggering an autoimmune response causing inflammation, which can manifest as a myriad of symptoms throughout the body and trigger or worsen a number of health conditions such as Crohn’s disease, IBS, chronic fatigue syndrome and eczema to name just a few.

5. REBALANCE

Your lifestyle habits have enormous influence on your digestive system and health. During this phase, we want to address:

- Stress management
- Improving sleep
- Moving more (or less, if necessary)
- Improving relationships

While this is presented as a step-wise approach, you may be working on multiple phases at the same time. For example, removing irritating foods, compounds and pathogens from the digestive tracts is the first step, it also initiates the repair phase. And if you’re only getting 6 hours of sleep a night, your gut-healing diet can only take us so far. “All disease starts in the gut”, therefore all healing starts there.



Digestion Quiz

1	Which of the following are common allergenic foods that you may want to remove in order to improve digestive health? A. Wheat B. Cow's milk C. Soy D. Eggs E. All of the above
2	What does your body need in order to digest food properly? A. Enzymes B. Hydrochloric acid (HCL) C. Bile acids D. All of the above
3	What is the ideal ratio of "good bacteria" vs. "bad bacteria in the gut?" A. 60:40 B. 80:20 C. 30:70
4	Which of the following is required to restore healthy flora to the gut especially during or after antibiotic use? A. Milk B. Eggs C. Supplemental probiotics
5	True or false, Leaky Gut Syndrome is where the intestinal lining becomes permeable allowing undigested food particles, pathogenic organisms and other chemicals to pass through the barrier into the blood stream. A. True B. False
6	Which of the following can be worsened by a Leaky Gut? A. Crohn's disease B. IBS C. Chronic Fatigue D. Eczema E. All of the above
7	Which of the following lifestyle habits will NOT improve your digestive system and health? A. Stress B. Sleep C. Improving Relationships
8	How many hours of sleep per night is ideal to support a gut-healing diet? A. 5 hours B. 6 hours C. 8 hours D. 12 hours

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ANSWERS
 1. E. All of the above
 2. D. All of the above
 3. B. 80:20
 4. C. Supplemental Probiotics
 5. A. True
 6. E. All of the above
 7. A. Stress
 8. C. 8 hours