

9 Signs of a Leaky Gut (and how to Heal It)

Dr. Amy Myers

The gut is the gateway to health. If your gut is healthy, chances are that you're in good health. However, there's a condition called leaky gut that can lead to a host of health problems.

What is a leaky gut?

The gut is naturally permeable to very small molecules in order to absorb these vital nutrients. In fact, regulating intestinal permeability is one of the basic functions of the cells that line the intestinal wall. In sensitive people, gluten can cause the gut cells to release zonulin, a protein that can break apart tight junctions in the intestinal lining. Other factors — such as infections, toxins, stress and age — can also cause these tight junctions to break apart.

Once these tight junctions get broken apart, you have a leaky gut. When your gut is leaky, things like toxins, microbes, undigested food particles, and more can escape from your intestines and travel throughout your body via your bloodstream. Your immune system marks these "foreign invaders" as pathogens and attacks them. The immune response to these invaders can appear in the form of any of the nine signs you have a leaky gut, which are listed below.

What causes leaky gut?

The main culprits are foods, infections, and toxins. Gluten is the number one cause of leaky gut. Other inflammatory foods like dairy or toxic foods, such sugar and excessive alcohol, are suspected as well. The most common infectious causes are candida overgrowth, intestinal parasites, and small intestine bacterial overgrowth (SIBO). Toxins come in the form of medications, like Motrin, Advil, steroids, antibiotics, and acid-reducing drugs, and environmental toxins like mercury, pesticides and BPA from plastics. Stress and age also contribute to a leaky gut.

If you suffer from any of the following conditions, it's likely that you have a leaky gut:

9 Signs You Have a Leaky Gut

1. Digestive issues such as gas, bloating, diarrhea or irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).
2. Seasonal allergies or asthma.
3. Hormonal imbalances such as PMS or PCOS.
4. Diagnosis of an autoimmune disease such as rheumatoid arthritis, Hashimoto's thyroiditis, lupus, psoriasis, or celiac disease.
5. Diagnosis of chronic fatigue or fibromyalgia.
6. Mood and mind issues such as depression, anxiety, ADD or ADHD.

7. Skin issues such as acne, rosacea, or eczema.
8. Diagnosis of candida overgrowth.
9. Food allergies or food intolerances.

How do you heal a leaky gut?

In my practice, I have all of my patients follow The Myers Way comprehensive elimination diet, which removes the toxic and inflammatory foods for a certain period of time. In addition, I have them follow a 4R program to heal their gut. The 4R program is as follows:

1. Remove.

Remove the bad. The goal is to get rid of things that negatively affect the environment of the GI tract, such as inflammatory and toxic foods, and intestinal infections.

2. Replace.

Replace the good. Add back the essential ingredients for proper digestion and absorption, such as digestive enzymes, hydrochloric acid and bile acids.

3. Reinoculate.

It's critical to restore beneficial bacteria to reestablish a healthy balance of good bacteria.

4. Repair.

It's essential to provide the nutrients necessary to help the gut repair itself. One of my favorite supplements is L-glutamine, an amino acid that helps to rejuvenate the lining of the gut wall.

If you still have symptoms after following the above recommendations, I would recommend finding a Functional Medicine physician in your area to work with you and to order a comprehensive stool test.

Common Symptoms and Conditions Associated with Leaky Gut

Elizabeth Lipski PhD, CCN

Common clinical conditions associated with leaky gut in children include:

- Allergy
- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Burn (severe burn damage can cause leaky gut)
- Cancer treatment (can cause leaky gut)
- Celiac disease
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Crohn's disease
- Cystic fibrosis
- Eczema
- Ear infection (recurring)
- Environmental illness
- Food sensitivity and/or allergy
- Giardia and/or other parasite
- Hives
- Hyperactivity
- Intestinal infection
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Learning and behavior problems
- Malabsorption/malnutrition
- Multiple chemical sensitivity
- Psoriasis
- Reiter's syndrome
- Schizophrenia
- Trauma
- Ulcerative colitis

The following list is applicable to both children and adults:

- Abdominal pain
- Aggressive behavior
- Anxiety
- Asthma
- Autoimmune disease
- Bed wetting
- Bloating
- Chronic joint pain
- Chronic muscle pain
- Confusion
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue and malaise
- Fever of unknown origin
- Fuzzy thinking
- Gas
- Indigestion
- Mood swings
- Nervousness
- Poor exercise tolerance
- Poor immune function
- Poor memory
- Recurrent bladder infection
- Recurrent vaginal infection
- Shortness of breath
- Skin rash
- "Toxic feelings"