

Module 4 Lesson 4

Transcript

By now, you're definitely understanding that the gut is connected to pretty much everything else in the body, so it makes sense that we have our immune system lesson in our module on gut health. Your immune system and gut are intimately linked. In this lesson I'm going to talk about the relationship between your GI tract and your ability to fight diseases, and what you can do to help clients boost the immune system through the gut. So let's get started.

When I think about it, it's really amazing how much our immune system does for us and how much we kind of take it for granted. Kids never say, "Wow, I'm really glad I'm not sick today and I didn't have to miss sledding because I had a cold." We never say, "It's really a good thing I don't have a terrible stomach ache and I can go to that party." Some of us deal with anxiety, IBS, frequent headaches, autoimmune diseases, and we're more likely to be appreciative of the moments we aren't in pain. But how many of us actually know what's going on inside that's keeping us from being ill? Do you think your clients realize that strong connection between their gut health and immunity? Research is really pumping out there between immunity and gut health. Like the gut and brain connection, a lot of this info is deeply rooted in, you guessed it, the microbiome.

Your gut flora is rich with living microbes and the balance of these bacteria, fungi and viruses is really delicate and it starts in the womb. You don't get a choice if you were a vaginal or caesarian delivery, but studies on newborns show that vaginally born babies show much stronger immune systems than their sterile environment born caesarian counterparts. Most of this is because the germs we absorb in our mouths and nose are protective during birth. There are just more protective germs introduced vaginally and from breast milk than from caesarian and formula.

This doesn't mean you can't have a great immune system if you are born by C-section, but you probably have a little bit of catching up to do. Until we develop our own immune systems, maternal immunology protects us from the germs we acquired during delivery and through breast milk. As our maternal immune protection wears off and our own gut floor is established, we grow hopefully, a broad, diverse balance of protective critters in our guts. We want to develop diverse, well-balanced colonies of microbes living in harmony, each with special roles and responsibilities. When we are born and we have immature immune cells, it's gut bacteria that teach these cells how to behave and distinguish helpful from invasive things that are introduced through the nose and mouth.

So when you inhale some pollen or eat a preservative, it's the cells that distinguish these foreign invaders and protect you from harm. Isn't that incredible? These microbes actually teach ourselves to work. If you didn't have solid immune cells fighting for you, like an army of warriors, you'd be chronically inflamed every time you ate a new food or breathe the air when the wind shifted. And dysbiosis can trigger inflammation, digestive or immune problems. So here we have yet another important reason to appreciate having a healthy balanced gut.

In a study of type one diabetes and obesity, researchers were able to transfer obesity to lean rats just by introducing their gut flora. In respiratory studies, we have learned that gut microbiome plays a role in COPD, asthma, pneumonia, and even certain lung cancers. Gut bacteria is associated as a link to colon cancer, tuberculosis, Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis, IBD, and as a driving factor in the development of autoimmune diseases.

I've spoken in previous lessons about how to promote good gut flora with fiber-rich food, whole grains, probiotics and the like, but specific to immunity, the research has pointed to a very important role of vitamin A in the gut, helping to regulate immune cells and immune functioning. It seems to help determine good versus bad bacteria introduced into the gut and regulates the immune response. But recommendations on vitamin a and take versus supplementation aren't available yet. Stand by for more on that. I know I'm waiting for that research.

In the meantime, progressive studies looking at specific bacterial colonies are finding that introducing depleted or missing bacteria via cocktails or enemas can reverse symptoms for suffers. Stay tuned on that as well. I have a feeling that testing our guts as well as our blood may be standard protocol at doctor's visits in the future.

So to summarize all of this fascinating info in just a few points here before we end. There's a strong connection between gut health and immunity. We have immature immune cells at birth and our gut bacteria teach these cells how to distinguish between helpful and invasive compounds. Research has linked gut health to a slue of different conditions and diseases, and you can help clients promote good gut flora by recommending fiber-rich foods, whole grains and probiotics. Specific to immunity, vitamin A in the gut helps regulate immune cells and immune functioning. So don't forget to promote those orange veggies like carrots and sweet potatoes, and also leafy greens like spinach and chard.

We're going to end on the greens today and that's all for today. I cannot wait to see you in the next lesson.

