

START WITH YOUR GUT

HOW YOU CAN GET *healthier faster*
BY TAKING THIS *one step*

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INTRODUCTION

I learned the importance of gut health firsthand, in a very eye opening and humbling experience that occurred in my twenties. My whole life I had been a pretty happy and high energy guy, but then suddenly everything started to change. I didn't know it at the time, but the series of events that followed would change my entire life.

At first I noticed I just felt kind of tired. You know, the kind of day you have every once a while where you feel like you are dragging? But, I was feeling like this every day; needing two to three naps a day, having a hard time thinking, and just wanting to put my head down and rest. Come to think of it, I was feeling cold too, and I was suddenly needing to wear more clothes than everyone around me. Maybe it was because I felt like my hair was starting to thin out also?

These symptoms certainly were not fun, but I figured it was just because I had a lot on my plate or maybe because I was 'getting a little older.' I didn't like the way I felt, but I guessed I could live with it. I mean, what else could I do? I was already eating well and exercising.

Then things started to get worse, and I soon learned how maddening insomnia can be. I would wake up at two in the morning and I would not be able to go back to sleep. I was tired during the day but for some cruel reason I was wide awake lying in bed at night. I was also craving sugar. So sometimes I would get in my car and drive to the store at 3am to buy a candy bar. When morning finally came, I was of course tired and had no problem sleeping when I needed to be awake. And, for the first time in my life, I knew what it felt like to be depressed as occasional bouts of depression set in.

I was starting to realize that this wasn't normal and that something had to be wrong. I thought to myself, *'Well I guess I will go see a doctor, this is what doctors are for, right?'* So I did. I went and saw three doctors: a family doctor, an internist, and an endocrinologist. I was relieved to be taking action and I knew a doctor would find something, tell me how to fix it, and then I could get on with my life. Good news and bad news was to follow.

The good news was the doctors all said there was nothing wrong with me, but this was also the bad news. Because there was nothing wrong with me, the doctors had no recommendations and there was nothing I could do.

I then decided it was time to take matters into my own hands. I was a pre-med student, was working as a personal trainer, and also studying holistic nutrition. It's because of this training that I already had myself on a healthy diet and exercise program, but obviously I needed to take things to the next level. ***I started reading and studying everything I could on my symptoms, which now included fatigue, depression, insomnia, feeling cold, thinning hair, and cravings.***

I eventually concluded that I had hypothyroid and adrenal fatigue. This fit all my symptoms! This had to be the cause I was looking for! I started on a number of different supplements that supported the adrenals and thyroid, and I started to feel better. I felt maybe 30% better, but this only lasted for a few weeks and then I slowly returned to normal. I was crushed. I was also a bit irritated because I spent a few hundred dollars on all these supplements.

As if things weren't bad enough already, then another symptom appeared that might have been the worst of all: brain fog. I experienced episodes where I felt like I was drunk: it was hard for me to speak clearly, I couldn't remember things, I felt uncoordinated and just like my head was in a fog. This would happen after I ate, but the food I ate didn't matter; it was completely random. I tried keeping a food journal, but nothing ever added up.

I continued on with researching and trying to solve my problems. Next I thought, "Maybe this was all because of low testosterone?" So I went on a testosterone-boosting protocol, which provided about a 30% improvement that was again short-lived. OK, more reading and internet research.... Perhaps it was mercury toxicity? Maybe this is why I also have brain fog? I was able to get a urine test and it showed high levels of mercury and lead. 'Yes! Finally, a test found something, this has **got** to be it,' I thought! I started on a metal detox program, and... felt no different. Even as my levels of metals improved according to the testing, my symptoms did not change. I then finally tried food allergy testing. This test showed a whole bunch of foods I was apparently allergic to. So I avoided these and felt like I was eating a diet of 4 foods total. Even after all of this excruciating dietary effort, I did not get better.

Finding Functional Medicine

At this point I was starting to feel crazy, clearly something was not right, but nothing had worked! Even treating test results hadn't helped. Luckily, I had a weekend workshop for my holistic nutrition training and heard about a doctor who practiced functional medicine, which was apparently the type of doctor everyone in this community went to. I got some more information on this doctor and it seemed like he did exactly what I needed, but he didn't take insurance and I was a student. At that point in time I had to save up to afford a haircut, never mind pay \$300 for an initial exam visit. But, what did I have to lose? At this point I was desperate, I would have done anything.



After seeing this doctor, he told me he was suspicious that I had an infection in my intestines. I remember thinking *'Are you kidding me? I don't have diarrhea or other digestive symptoms. Fix my insomnia, depression, and brain fog please!'* However, it turned out this doctor was right. I had an infection in my intestines and this **one thing** was the underlying cause of **all** my problems. As I treated this infection, I experienced slow and steady improvements of all my symptoms that lasted. Over the course of a few months I gradually returned to normal. What a relief!

I was so moved by my experience I decided to follow in this doctor's footsteps and went into functional medicine and took a special interest in digestive health. For the past several years I have been able to help sick and suffering people determine the cause of their illness and then recover and vastly improve their health. It has truly been an honor and privilege to do this work. However, I have also become increasingly concerned for those who were like me, sick and trying to recover their health.

With the boom of available information on the internet, people seem to be getting more and more confused about what to do. There is so much information and are so many options and opinions that someone could flounder with their own self-diagnosing and treatment, the way I was, for 30 years and still not have done it all. What makes matters even worse is this sea of information is further polluted by marketing jargon, which is made

to ***look like science*** in attempts to sell you a healthcare product. As someone who actually performs and publishes clinical research, I've found this appalling. Maybe worst of all is that healthcare is sometimes looked at as more of a business than it is a healing profession, and there are clearly those who are taking advantage of the fact that sick patients are willing to spend lots of money in order to feel better. All of this has created the perfect storm, where healthcare has become confusing, way too elaborate, and very expensive.

THE REALIZATION

I have been watching as patients find their way to my office after navigating this increasingly turbulent sea of healthcare options. I have often thought to myself, *“These patients are going through the same thought process I was, reaching for any possible solution, grasping for straws, self-diagnosing with hypothyroid, adrenal fatigue, food allergies, toxicity, etc...”*

I have come to realize that my experience is true for many; in fact, it’s true for the majority. My experience and that of the majority of my patients is: **you must start with the gut**. This is the most important area to address when starting on your healthcare journey, and **by improving the health of your gut, most other problems will disappear** – just like mine did. It’s not guaranteed to fix everything, but it is usually the best place to start.

How do I know this? Again, I know this because of my experience and that of my patients. I also know this because today I am **doing less** with my patients but getting better results than I was 7 years ago. **I am doing less testing and less treatment but getting patients better results, in less time with less money**. I should mention that in my first few years of practice I was ‘doing more’. Things like screening for food allergies, heavy metal detox protocols, and elaborate thyroid support – just like I did on myself many years ago. What happened to me happened to most of my patients: partial and temporary results but no lasting change. The one type of treatment that was **most consistently effective with long term results** were treatments for the health of my patients’ digestive tracts, for their guts.

An example

Here is an example: Johnny thought he had a genetic detoxification defect because of a gene known as MTHFR. He had done a commercially available genetic test on his own to find this detox defect gene and was concerned this was causing his fatigue and his joint pain. His joint pain was diagnosed as rheumatoid arthritis. I had seen many patients chasing down this gene as a cause of their illness and almost none of them found it to be helpful, but information about this gene sure did sell lots of supplements for supplement companies. What I did know is that Johnny had an autoimmune condition and that many autoimmune conditions emanate from the gut, where you have the largest density of immune cells in your entire body.

I also knew that there were some natural gut treatments that were shown to be as effective as the anti-inflammatory drug Prednisone in treating the joint pain and inflammation associated with rheumatoid arthritis. So what happened to Johnny? He did great; he experienced improvements within a week in his fatigue and joint pain. It didn't require any crazy elaborate testing or treatment programs. Just simple, practical care for his gut health wherein we addressed gut inflammation and bacterial overgrowth. It's important to mention that when Johnny first came to my office he did not have any digestive symptoms, but he still had problems in his gut that were manifesting as fatigue and joint pain. You can see Johnny and I discuss his experience [here](#).

It was because of repeat experiences like this that I started to question how necessary many of these things we do as doctors are necessary, such as things like: heavy metals testing, detoxes or cleanses, adrenal fatigue treatment, food allergies, gene testing, and so on. I started focusing on those things less and focusing more on what was working, the gut work. When I did this, I started getting better results, and because I wasn't focusing on several areas at once, I was doing less testing and treatment with my patients. This ultimately translates into patients getting better results in less time, with less money because they are doing less testing and treatment. So, we were doing less but achieving more. Just to be clear, there is a time and a place for these other items, but not until you have addressed the health of your gut. By the way, the difference in these two approaches is significant. Using testing as an example, when using a more conservative approach, one may only need to spend \$300-\$800 dollars on testing. Using the more standard approach, it's not uncommon for one to spend over \$3,500 on testing!



But what if you've already done some testing? For example, what if you've had a stool test and been told your gut is normal? This is far from a guarantee for a few reasons. Firstly, because many of the available stool tests (even top functional medicine stool tests) are not reliable. Secondly, there are imbalances in the gut that do not show up on testing, but rather require some self-experimentation to identify and correct. Thirdly, every gut is different and

requires personalized attention to determine what is needed to improve its health. So what this means is it takes more than a gluten free diet and probiotics to improve the health of your gut.

Here is another example that speaks to the issue of testing: Josh came to my office after being to every doctor in his area and having every available test for digestive health. Even the top gastroenterologists in his area tried to help him but were unable to help Josh feel better. He had extensive testing done, but none of this testing found anything. Fortunately, when I started working with Josh we were able to improve his condition. We did this by using a process I've developed called the **Great-in-8**; we will elaborate on this in a moment. Unlike Johnny who had no digestive symptoms, Josh had digestive symptoms but was also experiencing fatigue, depression, and lack of mental clarity, all of which improved once his digestive tract was healthier. The important point regarding Josh is even though he had been to some of the top digestive health specialists and performed many tests, he had still overlooked some key issues regarding his digestive health. Once we addressed these, he responded wonderfully and has never looked back. You can hear Josh discuss his experience [here](#).

THERE IS A SIMPLE SOLUTION

What all this means for you is *no matter who you are or what you have done, your next step should be your gut*. If you are floundering or confused regarding what to do – improving the health of your gut is the first step you must take. Again, this is not a 100% guarantee to fix everything, but *it is* the place you should start. By following this gut-first philosophy and using the clinical/self-help approach I have developed over the years (aka the *Great-in-8*), there are three important things you can achieve (the full *Great-in-8* plan is available in my new book here, www.drruscio.com/GutBook).

Effective

You will get better. There is a plan or approach that will be effective in resolving your health complaints.

Efficient

You will get better efficiently. It won't cost a fortune or require you to live like a health nut. We can obtain these results without needing thousands of dollars of testing, elaborate supplements programs, or crazy diets.

Empowered

You will feel empowered. You will feel resilient, not reliant. I'd like you to feel strong and confident in your health and not feel reliant upon restrictive diets or excessive supplement programs.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

So then how do we **efficiently** achieve **effective** results that also leave you feeling **empowered**? Let's cover a few important points in this regard. First, we have to understand how it is that improving the health of your gut can affect so many seemingly unrelated symptoms. For example, how did an intestinal infection cause me to have insomnia or depression but no digestive symptoms? Or how did a bacterial overgrowth cause Johnny to have fatigue and joint pain but no digestive symptoms?

The Gut Affects Everything

The reason for this is because your digestive tract impacts your entire body. But how? There are a few main ways:

1) Inflammation: the digestive tract is arguably the leading cause of inflammation in your body. When your gut is inflamed, it can cause inflammation throughout your entire body. This inflammation can cause:

- **Fatigue** – inflammation can cause fatigue by creating imbalances in stress hormones known as adrenal fatigue.
- **Depression or anxiety** – when inflammation gets into the brain it can alter your happy-mood chemicals known as neurotransmitters.
- **Brain fog** – when inflammation gets into the brain, it can cause brain fog (cloudy thinking).
- **Insomnia** – inflammation in the digestive tract has been documented to cause insomnia, as I found out the hard way.
- **Acne or other skin conditions** – it is often said that the skin is a reflection of the gut; healthy gut = healthy skin.
- **Female hormone imbalances** – inflammation can directly and indirectly alter the balance of female hormones and cause PMS (fatigue, irritability, bloating), altered cycle length or flow, low libido, and hot flashes. This also applies for men and male hormones.

- **Hypothyroid symptoms** - inflammation damages your body's ability to use thyroid hormone. So if your thyroid labs are normal or if you are on a thyroid medication but still exhibiting hypothyroid symptoms, inflammation is likely the cause.

2) Immune dysregulation & autoimmunity: the largest density of immune cells in your entire body is located in your small intestine. When there are problems in the small intestine, like bacterial overgrowths or inflammation, it can cause problems with the immune system. These immune system problems can look like:

- **Hypothyroid** – the leading cause of hypothyroid is an autoimmune condition known as Hashimoto's. Treating certain gut infections has been shown to improve thyroid autoimmunity.
- **Celiac disease & gluten intolerance** – both of these can occur because of immune dysregulation in the small intestine.
- **IBS (irritable bowel syndrome)** – those with IBS have been shown to have overactive immune responses in the gut.
- **Joint pain** – rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune condition which causes joint damage and pain.
- **Depression** – preliminary evidence shows depression may have an autoimmune component.
- **Food reactivity** – food allergies or intolerances are often because of immune system imbalances in your intestines.
- **Inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis)** – results from autoimmunity in the intestines.
- **Other autoimmune conditions may also be fueled by underlying gut imbalances.**

3) Nutrient absorption: you can be eating a healthy diet, but if you are not absorbing the nutrients then it's almost like you are eating nothing or eating junk food. This is known as malabsorption and it can manifest as:

- **Dry or thinning hair** – usually due to protein and fat malabsorption.
- **Dry or aged skin** – usually due to protein and fat malabsorption.
- **Fatigue** – because of general malnourishment.
- **Cravings** – when people don't absorb nutrients they often crave things like sugar, starch, and fat.
- **The nutrient deficiencies that occur after prolonged malabsorption can cause fatigue, brain fog, depression, and hormone imbalances, just to name a few.**
- **Slowed metabolism** – nutrient deficiencies can slow metabolism, which causes weight gain, high blood sugar, and even high cholesterol levels.

And of course, let's not forget that problems in the gut can cause digestive symptoms like gas, bloating, constipation, diarrhea, loose stools, reflux, and heartburn. Any of these symptoms are absolute confirmation that a problem in the gut is present.

It's because problems in your digestive tract can manifest as all these symptoms above that we must start with the gut first, because fixing the gut problem has the potential to remedy all these symptoms, thus making all the other treatment options obsolete.

The Small Intestine Connection

Perhaps the most common area of your digestive tract to cause problems is your small intestine. The small intestine is located in between your stomach and large intestine, aka your colon. Let's cover a few facts that illustrate how important the small intestine is.

Diets and gut interventions that are best for the small intestine are best for weight loss. It has been consistently shown that diets that are best for the small



intestine are better for weight loss. This is not a weight loss gimmick, but is rather simple physiology. The reason why ***the small intestine is so impactful on body composition is probably because the small intestine is responsible for 90% of caloric absorption!***

The importance of the small intestine doesn't end there. Did you know that ***bacterial overgrowths in the small intestine may contribute to hypothyroid, celiac, or IBS?*** It has been shown that those with gluten sensitivity, hypothyroid, or IBS often have small intestinal bacterial overgrowths. What's even more exciting is clinical studies have shown treating this bacterial overgrowth can improve gluten allergy symptoms, IBS, and may even improve hypothyroid.

As we have already discussed, ***the small intestine has profound impact on your immune system. The largest mass of immune cells is seen in the small intestine.*** Many of today's health ailments have an immune component to them, as we covered in point #2 above. What's also important to mention here is that when the immune system is acting up, this causes inflammation, so the immune system and inflammation are closely linked. This is another reason why improving digestive health, and more specifically improving small intestinal health, is so important – it impacts both immune function and inflammation. Also, don't forget that immune function and inflammation cause a myriad of symptoms. As we improve the health of the small intestine, we improve the health of your immune system and decrease inflammation – by doing this we treat the root cause of most symptoms and conditions.

But why is the small intestine so prone to dysfunction? Well, for two reasons. Firstly, ***the small intestine has a thin protective (mucous) membrane and is much more prone to damage (aka leaky gut) than the other sections of your digestive tract.*** Said more simply, the small intestine is delicate. Secondly, ***the small intestine comprises the majority of our intestinal tract, over 56%.*** So the largest part of your digestive tract also happens to be the most sensitive.

Here is an example of how the small intestine might be impacting your health. Let's say you experience bloating, fatigue, and brain fog. All of these can be caused by a gluten allergy. But let's also say you have gone gluten free, but you feel only slightly better.

What do you do? It has been well documented that those who are allergic to gluten but don't respond to a gluten free diet may have small intestinal bacterial overgrowth that is thwarting their improvements. Even more importantly, it has been shown that **treating** this bacterial overgrowth can eliminate these symptoms.¹

There are several options available for treating this bacterial overgrowth. Some people only require a little treatment and they respond beautifully. Others require more comprehensive treatment in order to respond. The good news is most of the treatments are natural. In order to help people improve their bacterial overgrowths (and other gut imbalances) efficiently, I have developed a personalized treatment method known as the **Great-in-8**. This method guides you through a personalized process wherein you do only as much as is needed to improve your underlying digestive tract imbalances, including bacterial overgrowth. By doing this, you never do more than you need to – this is what makes it **efficient**. It's a common mistake in alternative medicine to think more is better, however I have learned we can do more with less and this is what the **Great-in-8** helps us achieve (the full **Great-in-8** plan is available in my new book here, www.drruscio.com/GutBook).

What are some of the treatment options for small intestinal bacterial overgrowth?

The Low FODMAP Diet

FODMAPs are essentially compounds in foods that feed bacteria and can therefore feed bacterial overgrowth. Some foods are high in FODMAPs and other foods are low in FODMAPs. Because FODMAPs feed bacteria, eating a low FODMAP diet can reduce bacterial overgrowth. The low FODMAP diet has been incredibly well studied in the treatment of irritable bowel syndrome.² Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) can manifest with symptoms like gas, bloating, constipation, diarrhea, and abdominal pain.



But remember, there is also the connection between your gut and your brain. Low FODMAP diets have been shown to greatly reduce a compound known to cause brain fog, irritability, and insomnia. This compound is called histamine.³ Another reason why this low FODMAP diet is so effective is because it's been shown to reduce intestinal inflammation and intestinal autoimmunity.⁴

Probiotics

Certain probiotics have been shown to be effective for treating bacterial overgrowth in the small intestine. How does taking probiotics kill bacteria? Think of it like fighting fire with fire, using good bacteria to kill bad bacteria. For example, one study showed a probiotic blend worked 30% better than an antibiotic for treating small intestinal bacterial overgrowth⁵ and, more importantly, caused an 82% improvement in symptoms.

Again, remember the gut affects other systems of the body, so it should be no surprise that certain probiotics have also been shown to be an effective treatment for depression and anxiety.⁶

Probiotics have also been shown to reduce inflammation and autoimmunity in the intestines,^{7,8} but one has to be careful because if probiotics contain high levels of certain ingredients then it may worsen inflammation and autoimmunity.⁹

Herbal Antimicrobials

Sometimes we need to do more than diet and probiotics, and this is where herbal antimicrobials can be effective. These are herbs that have a long history of use with cultures around the world as anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, and anti-parasitic agents. These include things like oregano, garlic, and grapefruit seed, just to name a few. Studies have shown these herbs to be effective in treating bacterial overgrowth and the ability to remedy the symptoms of IBS: gas, bloating, diarrhea, constipation, and abdominal pain.¹⁰

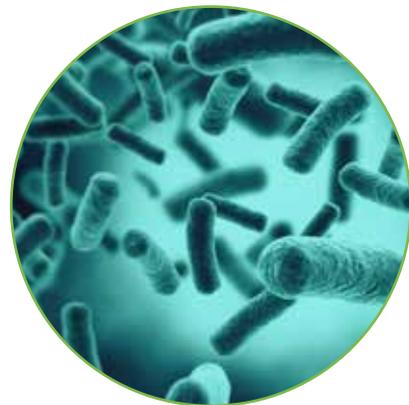
Using antimicrobial agents to treat bacterial overgrowth has also been shown to improve blood sugar and cholesterol levels and may even help with weight loss.¹¹ One of the things I like about herbal medicines is that they tend to have ‘side benefits’ instead of side effects, which many drugs have. Some herbal antimicrobials are very powerful in improving blood sugar levels and are therefore powerful in fighting diabetes,¹² while other herbal antimicrobials act as powerful anti-inflammatories.¹³

So with the right diet, probiotics, and herbal interventions, we can do volumes to improve not only your gut health but also things like depression, anxiety, insomnia, cholesterol, blood sugar, inflammation, and autoimmunity. Are you starting to see why it makes so much sense to start with the gut? I hope so, but there is more...

The World of Bacteria in Your Gut

We just covered the small intestine, and while this is an important area, there is more to your gut than the small intestine and small intestinal bacterial overgrowth. We are learning that there is literally a world of bacteria in your gut, containing over 1,000 species of bacteria. These bacteria are needed for many important functions, like:

- **Digestion**
 - Roughly 10% of our calories are from bacterial fermentation
 - Production of B vitamins and vitamin K
 - Produces compounds which are reparative to intestinal cells
- **Immune function**
 - Tones immune system
 - Crowds out pathogens (harmful organisms)
- **Detoxification**
 - Breakdown and removal of various toxins
- **Regulation of metabolism**



The Gut Microbiota

This world of bacteria in your gut is known as the microbiota. Micro means small and biota means organisms, so the microbiota is the world of small organisms, aka bacteria, that live inside you. We are learning that these bacteria are crucial for our health: **healthy bacteria = healthy you, unhealthy bacteria = unhealthy you**. So of course we want to have healthy bacteria, but how do we achieve this? In order to have healthy bacteria we must create a healthy environment for them to live. One of the key methods of creating a healthy environment for your gut bacteria is diet. Think about the world of bacteria in your gut being similar to an ecosystem like a rain forest or a desert. In order for an ecosystem to be healthy, it needs to have the right environment, right? For example, the right amount of rain and sun. Also realize that there is no 'one correct amount of rain and sun' that will be best for **every** ecosystem. For example, a tropical rainforest requires lots of rain, but

if this same amount of rain occurred in an arid climate like that of southern California, it would be a problem and cause flooding, mud slides, and much destruction. Just like different ecosystems require different amounts of rain, different gut bacteria ecosystems require different diets! When you understand this, it helps you cut through all the dietary confusion. It gives you an answer to questions like, “Should I be high carb, low carb, gluten free, or paleo diet?” When we look at the scientific research, we see all of these diets can help **some** people but none of them help **everyone**. This is because in order for a diet to be successful we have to make sure what the diet provides and what the gut ecosystem needs are in alignment – just like we need the right amount of rain for a given ecosystem.

One of the main determinants of diet is the carbohydrate intake, and we can think of carbohydrate intake like rainfall. Here are what different diets look like using our rain analogy:

- **Tropical ecosystem (rainforest)** = lots of rain = lots of carbs
- **Mediterranean ecosystem** = moderate rain = moderate carbs, just like the Mediterranean diet
- **Arid/Desert ecosystem** = little rain = low carb

It would be foolish to say there is one level of rainfall that is healthiest for all ecosystems, and accordingly it would be foolish to say there is one level of carb intake that is healthiest for all people. But rather, there is simple self-experimentation you can do to determine this. By the way, this ecosystem analogy is not a random analogy; it has been shown that as climates change people eat a different amount of carbohydrate in their diet because the climate dictates what is available¹⁴ - or at least they did before we had grocery stores that can supply us whatever we want whenever we want it.

When we get this dietary aspect right, people tend to have better energy, better digestion, and better metabolism – a nice by-product of taking care of your internal gut ecosystem of bacteria. Diet is the foundation of any health plan, but what if you need more than diet? Further, what if you need more than diet plus probiotics and herbal medicines?

Biofilms

There are times when people have tried a few different diets and tried probiotics (many maybe even some herbal treatments) and still not responded fully. When this happens, there is oftentimes an imbalance in bacteria or fungus. We have discussed bacteria already, but what about fungus? Well, fungus is like bacteria's cousin. They are very similar to each other and it's normal to have both of these in your intestines. But, when bacteria or fungus overgrow this can cause problems. Even more problematic is when you can't get rid of one of these overgrowths – for example, when diet, probiotics, and herbs aren't working. Fungus, most notably, can form a protective coating over it, making it hard to get rid of. This coating is called a biofilm. It has been clinically documented that treating the biofilm in addition to treating the bacteria or fungus can be the difference between success or failure in clearing the bacteria or fungus.¹⁵



Here is an example of what this can look like: Jen was referred to my office because her doctor didn't know what else to do. Jen was very well educated about health and was already on a great diet and exercise program. She was eating a lower carb paleo-like diet and doing circuit training for exercise. She was also getting enough sleep and seemed to have her life in good order overall. So why couldn't she lose weight and why was she not sleeping well? In fact, Jen had been slowly gaining weight over the years, going from a once healthy weight to now being more than 60 pounds overweight. When her doctor referred her to me, he said she is doing everything right, and that he wasn't sure what else he could do.

We determined Jen had a fungus known as candida and we treated it with the antimicrobial herbs we discussed a moment ago. At first, Jen got better and lost about 20 pounds in a month and saw her sleep improve. Great! But then, she gradually lost all of these improvements. She was super frustrated, but I knew that when this happens it often means the fungus is being protected by a biofilm. We treated Jen again with the antimicrobials, but this time included some anti-biofilm treatments. Over the course of a few months Jen lost over 60 pounds, was sleeping great, and ended up keeping this weight off well over 2 years. Jen and I discuss her story [here](#).

When All Else Fails

Then there are times when nothing seems to work. In some of these cases, we need to do a complete gut reset. We can achieve this using a very special liquid diet known as an elemental or semi-elemental diet. On the surface, this appears similar to a 'cleanse,' where people drink cleansing shakes in order to 'detox;' however, there is one key difference. Elemental and semi-elemental diets use very specific ingredients that are easy to digest, extremely gut friendly, and are hypo-allergenic. With short term use of this specific liquid diet, we can achieve a reset of the gut. This tends to reduce inflammation, calm the immune system, reset the balance of bacteria and fungus, and allow the gut a chance to heal and repair.

There are several different versions of elemental and semi-elemental diets available and they can be used in different amounts and durations depending on your needs. Because of this, they should be used under the guidance of a clinician who knows how to use them. For example, elemental and semi-elemental diets are incorporated into the **Great-in-8** process to be used at the right time, for the correct length, and in the appropriate amount. Whether you use one of these or not depends on how well you are feeling when you arrive at Step 3 of the **Great-in-8** process (the full **Great-in-8** plan is available in my new book here, www.drruscio.com/GutBook).

RESULTS

Remember our goal is to help you

1. Get healthy – *be effective*
2. Without spending a ton or doing crazy supplements or diets – *be efficient*
3. And while feeling confident and happy instead of worried and fearful – *feel empowered.*

Let's look at a few other examples of how we can achieve this with our gut-first philosophy.

When I met Debbie she had been struggling with a life-long battle with weight gain, but whenever she tried to lose weight, it would cause her to become tired, fatigued, and have constipation and gas. After some time she also started to experience brain fog, insomnia, and nervousness. She had tried various diets and supplement plans, but nothing seemed to be working. She even tried some therapies for her gut health but just couldn't seem to find anything that worked.

Debbie had a great attitude and was making efforts to get healthy but just couldn't get better... It turned out Debbie had imbalances in her gut that had been previously overlooked. We used some of the same therapies we just discussed in the sequencing that is laid out by the *Great-in-8* plan. After working through the process, Debbie's insomnia was gone, she saw major improvement in her rosacea, energy, brain fog, constipation, and anxiety, and she finally started losing weight. She even had enough energy to start exercising again. At the end of the process, Debbie was able to eat foods she hadn't been able to eat in years and was very happy with her newfound health. Again, we did all of this by intelligently applying some of the gut techniques we discussed above as they are laid out in the *Great-in-8* plan. Debbie and I discuss her case [here](#).



We discussed earlier how thyroid problems can ultimately stem from the gut, so let's look at an example of that. June was hypothyroid, and when she came into my office she wanted to prevent this condition from becoming worse. June's hypothyroidism was being caused by thyroid autoimmunity. As we discussed earlier, the most common cause of hypothyroid is thyroid autoimmunity, known as Hashimoto's, wherein your immune system attacks and damages your thyroid gland. Clinical research has shown that treating certain bacterial infections in the gut can improve thyroid autoimmunity,¹⁶ so it was no surprise to see that after improving the health of her gut by cleaning out unhealthy bacteria June's thyroid autoimmunity improved. But remember, the benefits of improving gut health are far reaching. As we improved her gut health, June also experienced increased energy, her insomnia was much improved, and her sugar cravings were much better. Her hot flashes also went away and she lost 10 pounds of belly fat. She also commented that people were telling her that she looked great and June commented that she felt like a new person. Through our work June also noticed that she was very sensitive to gluten and that it was best to avoid this in her diet. June and I sat down to discuss her improvements [here](#).

What's also nice about June's case is we were not excessive in our treatment. We focused on improving her condition and then we worked to find the minimum amount of dietary changes and supplements needed to maintain this improvement. This left June feeling happy, healthy, and confident, and not like a health nut dependent upon a crazy diet or excessive supplement popping.

Speaking of diet, sometimes all that is needed is to find the right gut-healthy diet and miraculous improvements can occur. Patricia was a good example of this. She came to see me because she was concerned about a thyroid nodule. Thyroid nodules form in your throat where your thyroid gland is located. If they become big enough they can cause discomfort and even difficulty speaking, breathing, and swallowing. Her regular doctor said there wasn't much he could do for her, so Patricia was looking for other options. Within three days of improving her diet, the swelling and discomfort from her thyroid nodule improved and has stayed improved ever since. She also had better energy, had lost 8lbs after 3 weeks, had less cravings, and was just generally feeling great. Even I was shocked at how quickly she responded. What likely happened to Patricia was as her diet improved, this reduced inflammation in her gut, which also reduced inflammation in her thyroid, thus reducing the

thyroid nodule. And as with June from a moment ago, Patricia was also able to achieve these results without resorting to fanatical interventions. We could have done a lot more but we didn't need to. We personalized our recommendations and Patricia was able to achieve remarkable improvements quite quickly and inexpensively. This is why having a personalized plan is so important; it prevents excess. Patricia and I discuss her experience [here](#).

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

We have covered a few very effective tools that can be used in improving your gut health. And we have also established that improving your gut health is the most important **first step** you can take on your healthcare journey because it has the potential to fix everything. Remember, this holds true even if you don't have digestive symptoms. But how **exactly** do you improve your gut health? Do you use the tools we discussed all at once? Are there other tools? How long do you use them? How do you know if it's working? When do you stop using them? How do you create a long term maintenance plan? How do you handle a setback? These questions are answered by the **Great-in-8** process. This is a self-help process I have developed over the years that applies the most **effective** gut treatments in a logical sequence of personalized steps so as to get you healthy **efficiently**.

I should also clarify that the **Great-in-8** is not a do-it-yourself **protocol**. Something I have observed over the years is people are looking for the magic protocol; they often ask questions like 'what can I do' or 'what can I take' or 'what would you suggest for [insert symptoms here]'.... They try one thing and it doesn't work so they jump to the next thing, and on and on.... (kind of like I did many years ago). Unfortunately, this type of approach rarely works because there is no magic **protocol**. The magic is in the process. If you keep trying protocols long enough you may find one that helps, but is that efficient from a time or a cost perspective? No, of course not. The **Great-in-8 process** will guide you to what you need and nothing more. Some people may only need two steps of the eight contained in the **Great-in-8**, and then they're done because they feel great. Others may need all eight in order to feel great. That is the beauty of a personalized process. A protocol versus a process is akin to comparing knowledge to wisdom. The difference between knowledge and wisdom is experience. You can get knowledge (aka a protocol) in seconds on the internet; what is much harder to come by is wisdom (a sound process). It's only when someone has spent years and years working in a field and **applying** knowledge that they eventually develop **wisdom**. This is why I am excited to have this process available to help you improve your health.

I have written a book which walks you through this personalized **Great-in-8** process in what I feel to be the most progressive and comprehensive self-help guide available to date. Perhaps equally as important is that this book and process are devoid of dogma, fear mongering, and excessive and elaborate diet and treatment plans. It's full of simple, practical, and powerfully effective information to help you improve your health and feel empowered. You can learn more about the book or pick up a copy at www.drruscio.com/GutBook.

If you are a doctor or healthcare provider and would like to learn more about how to offer this type of work to your patients, then I invite you to join me in my monthly practitioner-only newsletter at <http://drruscio.com/review/>.

IN CLOSING

I know it's tough when you don't feel well; I have been there. I also understand that nowadays it can feel paralyzing trying to figure out what to do because of all of the available options and conflicting opinions out there. I hope this eBook has provided you a guiding light in today's sea of options, and that you will use the resources available to you to improve your health.

*In health,
Dr. Michael Ruscio*