

Solving Emma's Troubled Digestion

When Emma (name changed) received her test results, she was a little surprised. She had originally come to see me for help with digestive troubles, fatigue, and some body fat she couldn't lose. She had been to the doctor, and even seen a gastrointestinal specialist.

The specialist had been unable to find anything wrong with her and simply suggested that she try changing her diet. No other recommendations were given. The truth is that specialists are under a great deal of time pressure, so when they can't find something seriously wrong with a patient, they really don't have the time to go through an extensive nutritional counseling session.

That's one of the reasons why I see many clients in the same situation as Emma: they have a history of chronic problems, have been to the doctor, and have been told after extensive testing that nothing's wrong!

Emma's symptoms included:

- Frequent heartburn
- Bloating
- Gas
- Gurgling noises in her stomach
- Headaches after eating certain meals
- Annoying fatigue (as opposed to severe or debilitating fatigue)

Emma had even had a stool test done to look for infections in her digestive tract, but it came back normal. I suspected that Janet was suffering from food intolerances. In particular, I was concerned about wheat (gluten) and milk (lactose).

I recommended that Emma should complete an Adrenal Stress Profile and a saliva test that checks for Gluten, soy, egg and lactose intolerance.

The Gluten Profile is a saliva lab test that looks for antibodies to the gliadin molecule, which is part of the gluten protein. People with gluten intolerance lack the ability to digest the gluten protein and their intestines become damaged and inflamed, meaning that they can't absorb other nutrients as effectively.

The treatment is simple — education and staying away from foods that contain gluten. At first, this can be a tough change to make. But most people who are gluten intolerant feel much better within a very short space of time.

Emma's saliva test indicated that her body was reacting against gluten/gliadin. I suggested that she see her medical doctor for follow-up blood testing to confirm the saliva test. Emma asked if we could just try the dietary changes for few months instead. I agreed. Her adrenal glands did show signs of fatigue, but that's often secondary to chronic digestive problems so we began by addressing her dietary issues.

The information I was able to gather from Emma's Initial Paperwork screen suggested that we could get started on some simple lifestyle adjustments right away.

Getting Emma off bread products

Emma indicated that she craved baked goods and ate them frequently from morning until bed time. Since most baked goods are gluten-containing products, we had to get her off of those. It was going to be a challenge for her, but she was committed to feeling better. She substituted various fruits and coconut snacks for the baked products

Helping Emma start exercising

Emma didn't get much exercise. We started her with a walking program, and added in a routine of bodyweight and Swiss Ball exercises to help her posture and boost her metabolism.

A new set of eating habits without the gluten products

Every two weeks during her coaching sessions, we spent a lot of time planning Emma's meals. She and her husband started doing more cooking together, and started eating more vegetables. It was important that her husband understood why she was making these changes and that he helped her as much as possible.

It is common for women to come to me and tell me that they can't make certain changes because they have to cook for their husband, partner or kids. It's important that everyone is on board when lifestyle changes need to be made to help people feel better.

Taking Emma off of dairy products

Most patients with gluten intolerances also have trouble digesting lactose, which is the sugar in dairy products. Many adults lose the ability to produce the enzyme (lactase) that breaks down lactose. When these people consume dairy, they experience bloating, gas, and other digestive symptoms. I switched her to goat and sheep cheeses, and gluten-free crackers.

My biggest concern with Emma was getting her digestive system to recover from years of gluten intolerance. So during the first two months, we kept her diet very simple (and kind of boring). It was tough for her at first, but with her husband's support, she started really enjoying "eating more cleanly", as she likes to say.

We actually met weekly to help her stay focused.

After the first three months, Emma had lost 15 pounds of fat. She looked and felt great. The few times that she cheated and ate gluten-containing products left her feeling lousy the next day, so this actually helped her stick to her diet. Her husband also lost about 10 pounds without trying.

Emma's digestive symptoms are basically gone now. She can tolerate small amounts of dairy & wheat, like a slice of pizza or an ice cream cone with her grandkids, but she knows her limits. We never really treated the fatigue directly, it improved alongside her diet.

Emma's case is pretty typical. Taking the time to look for underlying problems can help people make a few basic changes that profoundly impact how they look, feel and live.

If you you've been suffering with chronic digestive symptoms, why not register for a free 15min consultation so that I can talk through the lifestyle issues that I think may be causing your problems?