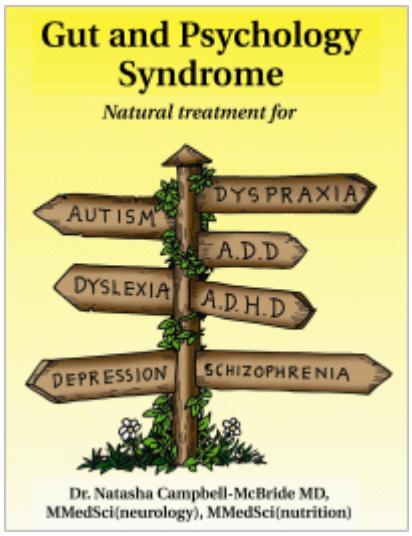
Why GAPS?

Because we **can heal**. Because medications squelch symptoms which are warning signs that something isn't working right. Because we don't have to live with IBS, colitis and Crohns, ulcers and digestive problems, joint pain and skin problems, depression and anxiety, constipation and diarrhea. We can heal and seal our guts, rebalance our microbiome, and live the healthy, pain free lives we were designed to live.

Is it easy? Well, it takes planning, preparation and commitment. Is it worth it? To answer that, you must ask yourself what price you would pay to have your body feel good. The testimonials around the world of people who have successfully healed from all the issues mentioned above tell me that it IS worth it. The fact that I personally no longer have any joint pain, which my family saw as hereditary, makes it worth it for me.

So, what is GAPS? The letters stand for Gut and Psychology Syndrome. The acronym and diet were created by Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride in 2004. Dr. Natasha has helped patients around the world heal from psychological issues such as autism, ADHD, depression and anxiety, as well as from physiological (body related) problems like autoimmune conditions, chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia, arthritis, headaches, PMS and all digestive disorders. Therefore, GAPS also stands for Gut and Physiology Syndrome.



The body gets nutrition to build and rebuild itself through the digestive system. Unfortunately, in the world today and especially in the United States, the standard American diet (SAD) not only cannot sustain the body, but it leads to the deterioration of it. Our lifeless processed food does not give our body what it needs to build new tissue. One of the first places to be damaged is our intestines which become permeable or otherwise known as “leaky gut”. In addition, our overabundance of sugar caramelizes in our blood vessels wreaking havoc on our brains, eyes and nerves (and elsewhere).

When we have a leaky gut, things that aren’t supposed to get into our blood stream do and these can cause issues all over the body. A major contributing factor to this is an unhealthy microbiome. I strongly encourage you to read this article to understand why our microbiomes are imperative to our health.

What do we do in GAPS? We heal and seal that leaky gut with a healthy diet including lots of meat stock, grass fed/wild meat and animal fats and probiotic rich fermented foods. As we’re healing and sealing, we’re working toward reducing the toxic load on the body. This second part is so important because, unfortunately, we live with an overabundance of chemicals that our bodies can no longer handle.

What is the end result of GAPS? A digestive system that takes

in what it needs to build healthy tissue while preventing the bad stuff from leaking through and causing dis-ease. We fix what's broken and the body works like it's supposed to.

Real food ~ it's the new medicine.

Gluten 101

We've been hearing the word gluten for some time now…WHAT is up? For the newbies, I thought I'd write a simple "Cliff Notes" version of the issue.

Humans have been eating bread for millennia, what's the big problem now?
Well, things were fine when nature was overseeing natural hybridization, but in the 1960's, a movement began to hybridize wheat in the lab to increase yields. No safety tests were done. The 1990's saw even more changes in the grain. At least 5% of the proteins in wheat now were NEVER in the food supply before. We have not evolved to be able to digest them, so they're wreaking havoc on our bodies.

Who is at risk of gluten sensitivity?
Unfortunately, just about everyone in the U.S., unless you've been eating solely ancient grains that the body knows how to process; these include einkorn and emmer. In addition, the grains needs to be processed by traditional methods to neutralize anti-nutrients – soaking and fermenting (true sourdough).

Where do we find gluten?

Everything made with wheat, rye, barley, and triticale (cross between rye and wheat). So we're talking pizza, pasta, bread, breadING, baked goods, cereal, etc. Gluten can be found in oats through cross contamination but gluten free oats are available from suppliers who are careful to avoid this.

What digestive problems can be caused by gluten?
Annoying things like constipation, heartburn, gas and bloating and diarrhea. With time, these will lead to more dangerous concerns like IBS, GERD, food intolerances, pancreatitis and celiac disease.

Are there other concerns besides digestion?
Oh, yes, non-celiac gluten sensitivity (NCGS) can be responsible for or increase the severity of:
Skin problems – rash, acne, dark circles under the eyes, eczema, psoriasis.
Neurological symptoms – brain fog, ADHD, balance problems, headache (including migrane), increase symptoms of autism and schizophrenia.
Emotional problems – irritability, anxiety, dementia and Alzheimers, depression.
Musculoskeletal issues – fibromyalgia, joint pain and arthritis, chronic fatigue and reduced physical endurance.
Weight gain – especially around the middle and well as an increase in appetite.
Other – asthma, increase in blood pressure, just to name a couple.

Can gluten affect children and infants?
Definitely. Gluten has been found to be a major contributing factor in colic, chronic ear infections, poor sleep, digestive issues and skin eruptions like eczema in children.

So, what IS celiac disease, anyway?
Celiac disease is a digestive disease that severely damages the villi in the small intestine. Since it is in the small intestine that we get the nutrients out of our food, the body

becomes malnourished because it cannot take in nutrients to rebuild itself. Significant deficiencies in minerals like iron, magnesium and zinc can cause a multitude of problems.

What does gluten do in the body?
VERY simply, in increases a substance called zonulin which makes our intestines become leaky. Then all sorts of things, like proteins, can leak out and go to the part of our body that is vulnerable (joints – arthritis, brain – fog and dementia, skin – acne).

What is the incidence of gluten sensitivity?
We know that celiac disease is on the rise, effecting about 2% of the population now, but non-celiac gluten sensitivity may affect between 30 and 40% of us, and "according to Dr. Alessio Fasano at Massachusetts General Hospital, virtually all of us are affected to some degree." More info here from Dr. Mercola.

Can you have a problem with gluten and have no noticeable digestive issues?
Certainly. Sensitivity to gluten can show up anywhere.

The best way to see if it is affecting you, is to cut gluten out of your diet for a month (6 weeks is even better). I'd be surprised if you didn't feel better.

Until next time…wishing you **real food**, for **real health**, so you can be **real happy.**

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7 Simple Steps to Better Digestion

Specializing in digestive wellness, I have to encourage people

to eat the highest quality food they can afford. Yes, I'm aware that grass fed animal products and organic produce cost more. Yes, they are worth it. However, we can only purchase what we can afford. Do the best you can.

My 7 Simple Steps, however, do not cost extra and they can be the difference between getting the most from our food/drink and not taking in the vital nutrients we need to thrive. I could site sources and scientific evidence for each step, but for this article I've chosen to stay simple. Trust me, these are activities that have been proven to be beneficial.

Ask yourself, do I…?

1. Say grace/bless my food/express appreciation for the food I am about to welcome into my body.

2. Eat at a table. Not in the car. Not walking around. Not at my desk.

3. Breathe while I eat. Try to enjoy the flavor of each bite.

4. Chew my food and don't rush my meal. (This mechanical portion of the digestive process sets the stage for the rest of your food to be broken down effectively.)

5. Don't drink a cold liquid with the meal…it puts out the digestive "fire". It's fine to have cold drinks between meals.

6. If I am going to drink with a meal, limit the liquid to about 4 ounces, otherwise I dilute the acid in my stomach which is needed to break down food. (Lemon and water enhances digestion, by the way.)

7. Leave about 5-6 hours between meals if I can. (Snacking stresses the pancreas among other things.)

How many do you do?

Until next week…wishing you **real** food (eaten at a table) for

real health (that is savored) so you can be **real** happy (and grateful).

What's with the Coconut Oil?

This is the first in a 2 part series on consuming coconut oil and coconut products. While this article addresses the "why?" the next article will be the "how".

For balanced energy, blood sugar and health

One of the primary things I suggest for my clients (and family and friends) to consider is adding coconut oil into their lifestyle. The reason is 2-fold. First and foremost we have got to get those toxic vegetable oils out of our diets. We were told they were good for us because of the polyunsaturates, right? However, the truth was skewed to benefit the edible oil industry. The process by which they are made is downright scary. Vegetable oils (i.e. corn, soy, canola, etc) become even more toxic when they are heated. These oils, as well as margarine, were NEVER good for us, but their sale is good for market share. Unfortunately, what is on TV and in the media does not have to be the truth, it just has to make money.

The second reason is the plethora of benefits the human body can gain from consuming coconut oil (orally and through the skin). Read on.

From Sally Fallon's foundational *Nourishing Traditions – The Cookbook that Challenges Politically Correct Nutrition and the Diet Dictocrats* we learn how oils like coconut and palm have protected third world tropical communities from fungus and bacteria in their food supply for generations. As more recent generations have switched to poly-unsaturated vegetable oils, the incidence of intestinal disorders has increased. This is because coconut oil is chalked full of medium chain fatty acids (also called medium chain triglycerides) like lauric acid which has strong **anti-fungal, anti-viral and anti-bacterial** properties. The only substance that has as much lauric acid is human breast milk – liquid gold to an infant's developing immune system. The body changes the fatty acid to mono-laurin which can destroy lipid coated viruses like HIV virus, measles virus, herpes simplex virus-1 (HSV-1).

From Dr. Ray Peat we see: An important function of coconut oil is that it supports mitochondrial respiration, **increasing energy production** that has been blocked by the unsaturated fatty acids we been told to consume for the last several decades. While these polyunsaturated fatty acids inhibit thyroid function on many levels, coconut oil can promote thyroid function by reducing those toxic effects. It allows normal mitochondrial oxidative metabolism, without producing the toxic lipid peroxidation that is promoted by unsaturated fats. This **assistance with metabolism helps with weight control**, something most of my clients are concerned about.

From Dr. Bruce Fife: Consuming coconut oil **slows down sugar being absorbed in the bloodstream and helps with the secretion of insulin by the pancreas**. We all depend on our pancreas so whether you're diabetic or not, this is positive for your body.

So coconut oil increases our immunity, helps our pancreas, blood sugar, thyroid and metabolism. Does it do anything else? According to an article by Dr. Mary Enig it helps **improve heart health promoting normal platelet function**. The liquid vegetable oils in the grocery store do the opposite – they increase platelet stickiness which can lead to blood clots.

After starting consumption of coconut oil on a regular basis, clients tell me they feel better than they have in years, their skin is more supple, and they don't get hungry (and subsequently don't snack too much like they used to). However, the most exciting case study of which I am aware regarding the benefits of coconut oil comes from Dr. Mary Newport whose husband has shown remarkable **cognitive and functional gains** since he began to consume coconut oil. Dr. Newport, medical director of the NICU (newborn intensive care unit) at Spring Hill Regional Hospital in Florida, watched as her 53 year old husband became incapacitated by early onset Alzheimer's. When conventional medication failed to help his condition, Dr. Newport (after much research) decided to try using coconut oil because of the medium chain triglycerides. The liver converts MCTs directly to ketone bodies, which are then available for use as energy by the brain. Her husband just celebrated his fourth year of improved functioning, not the regression usually seen in Alzheimer's patients. We aren't aware yet what it can do for the "average" brain.

So much to ponder…

Next week we will take a practical look at how to add this wonderful substance to your life everyday. Adding coconut oil to one's diet is easy on the body since most of the fatty acids in it do not require bile for digestion. And the body turns them directly into energy providing fuel to meet the activity expectations we have for our busy lives.

Until then, wishing you REAL food, for REAL health so you can be REAL happy.