

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.

What to do with all those summer veggies - STIR FRY



Do you have a CSA share (community supported agriculture)? Are you growing your own veggies and want to use as much as you can while they're fresh? I'm doing both so it's the season to get creative.

For those of us with CSAs, you probably know what it's like to get a vegetable you've never seen before. And since you've never seen it before, what do you do with it? STIR FRY. No matter what veggie it is, you can make it tasty in a stir fry. Here's one I just created. It took me 20 minutes total (besides marinating and having the rice already cooked from the day before).

To make it you'll need:

1-2 large boneless/skinless chicken breast(s) (marinated all day in the frig with aminos {coconut or Bragg's})

2 small or 1 large onion sliced thinly (unless you'd prefer more crunchy)
1 large carrot sliced 1/4" thick
2 small summer squash sliced 1/4" thick
2 bok choy, chopped
4-6 leaves kale, chopped
1/4 cup bacon grease (grass-fed only)
1 T sesame oil
1 T coconut oil
1 tsp organic garlic powder
1 tsp sea salt
2 T sunflower seeds ([soaked and dehydrated preferred](#))
Optional – 3-4 cups of cooked rice (best if it's been soaked before cooking)

Melt bacon grease in medium heat large skillet and once melted, put in the chicken breast to sear on both sides (about 3-5 minutes each side). It's a good idea to have a screen handy to keep the splatter to a minimum. While it's cooking, that's when I do the chopping, but you can have it all chopped in advance if you like.

Remove breast from pan to a plate or cutting board and throw the onions and carrots in the skillet – cover with screen. Slice up the chicken breast in about 1/2" slices and throw in with the onions and carrots. Turn the heat down to low/medium. Stir every few minutes.

Once the chicken is back in the pan, in another skillet melt the coconut oil over medium heat then add the squash. Cook about 5 minutes then add the greens and garlic powder. Cover with a lid and let simmer over low/medium heat for about 5 minutes.

You'll know the chicken/onion/carrot mixture is done (about 10 minutes) when you take a piece of the chicken out and cut it on a plate and it's nice and tender. Now, put the rice and sesame oil in the big skillet and mix together. The other skillet should be about done so mix those veggies in, too. Add

salt to taste and top with sunflower seeds on individual servings.

If you wonder about the rice preparation, see my [Yummy Good for You Casserole](#).

Don't have the veggies listed? Substitute WHATEVER veggies you have.

Don't have the bacon grease? Substitute grass fed lard or ghee or butter. Remember, you NEED THE FAT! All [healthy traditional diets](#) had an abundance of fats.

Don't have the sunflower seeds? Substitute almonds, sesame seeds, cashews...anything with a crunch. Watch the preparation methods, though, for maximum nutrition.

Don't have the aminos on hand? Add a little extra salt at the end and you'll be fine.

Want it to have a little more kick? Sprinkle in a bit of organic cayenne.

Just STIR FRY!

Wishing you a summer full of **real food** for **real health** so you can be **real happy**.

[Why are we fat?](#)

This post is dedicated to that amazing group from Unity of Muskegon who meet for Let's Talk Wellness and are making positive changes toward better health every day. I am SO proud of you all!

Last year as I ended our second year of monthly meetings at

Unity on wellness, I asked what people wanted to discuss in the 2014. The topic of interest most requested was the title of this article. Yes, we already understand that being as active as possible reduces our fat reserves, so I didn't focus on exercise. Everyone knows...get up and move! But if we don't address the misinformation out there, we don't stand a chance at weight loss and management.

Since I do not teach about short term fixes at the expense of the body's health, we must address lifestyle changes, dispelling the myths we've been told the last 3 decades, to build vital cells, tissues and bodies. The focus must be on sharing the [truth](#) about the need for healthy fats and nutrient dense foods and how the low-fat/high whole grain/"sugarfree" additive recommendations have led us to the obesity fiasco we are in now.

Below is my evidence based summary of why we are larger (and much less healthy) than we should be:

- Eating [BAD fats](#) (polyunsaturated, liquid vegetable oils, margarine, oils from [GMO crops](#) {soy, cottonseed, canola, corn}, fatty meat/poultry from conventionally raised animals {complete with antibiotics, growth hormones, GMO fed, pesticide residue, no to very little sunlight}).



My family's favorite fat

- Not eating enough [good fats](#) (coconut, extra virgin olive oil, grass-fed meat and poultry, wild caught fish, avocado, cod liver oil). Low-fat foods lead to obesity because we

substitute with...

- Sugar and empty carb consumption (anything made with a fine powder like flour, like baked goods, candy, chips, pastas). These carbs are digested quickly and stimulate the [hormone insulin](#), which, among other things stores fat in fat cells. [High fructose corn syrup](#). [Diet sodas](#).

- Eating processed and [non-organic foods](#) (and using [chemicals on our bodies](#), in our homes and on our yards). These foods often have [pesticide residues](#) which keep our body from taking in the minerals we need to make our metabolism work correctly. Our bodies need nutrients to function and be the “right” weight for our structure. These empty foods lead to...

- Overeating – which we do WHEN WE ARE NOT EATING NUTRIENT DENSE FOODS! Our body keeps saying, “where are the nutrients?” and then “eat more and you might find some.” We can also get into the habit of over eating because of emotional issues, but again, it is often, if not always, nutrient deprived foods. We seldom eat too much when the food is REAL and nutrient rich.

- An unhealthy [microbiome](#). Our balance of good micro-organisms in our body plays a significant role in our health and weight.

- When we have an underactive thyroid, we have a very difficult time trying to shed pounds. Be aware that water with chlorine and [fluoride](#) is thyroid disruptive. Drinking the cleanest water possible is a must. Also, good quality [coconut oil](#) supports the thyroid and is energy boosting.

What to do? The same thing I teach for other physical/emotional issues...

- Eat good fats at every meal
- Eat protein from clean (organic, grass fed, preferably local) sources at every meal – we need protein to make the happy chemicals in our brain
- Eat plenty of colorful, local (for more vitamin content),

organic (for more mineral content) vegetables WITH LOTSA BUTTER (or ghee)!

- Take good quality coconut oil – even at every meal.
- Take a high quality probiotic and/or fermented foods and drink.
- Eat organic fruits as desserts (“cave people” ate them in the fall to fatten up for the winter)
- If you feel the need for baked goods, make them out of nut flour (organic preferably).
- Don’t starve yourself. This will mess up your hormones. EAT! Just eat the real foods described above.

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

[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.

What We've Learned from Traditional Diets

Why are these People so Healthy?



Native people eating traditional foods had physical excellence, splendid facial and dental arch forms, and no cavities.

Our standard American diet is **sad**; sad because its consumption is making us sick. Rates of cancer, diabetes and heart disease, as well as obscure diseases and behavioral problems in children are higher than ever.

Theories of healthy nutrition come and go, which only adds to

the confusion about what we should eat to be healthy. The food industry loves this because then we all just throw our hands up and say..."everything is bad for you." This is just not true. While sifting through all the claims and advice is not easy, when you use common sense and diligence, the truth emerges.

Fortunately we have the work of [Weston A Price](#) to show us what people who were truly healthy ate. Dr. Price identified 14 groups of disease free people. If we look at the diets of these hearty people we see they had similarities with each other but were very different to how we eat today. These common factors helped them build strong bodies that resisted disease.

Here are the 9 common characteristics of these life sustaining diets. Compare them with how you eat – could there be a correlation with your own aches, pains, tooth decay and other health problems? The answer is yes.

1. 30% to 80% of calories were from fat
2. Unrefined salts were eaten regularly
3. Lacto-fermented foods provided healthy bacteria for the intestine (this is where our nutrients are taken in to build our cells)
4. Absolutely no denatured/refined foods were eaten (no flour, sugar, lowfat milk, refined vegetable oils, food additives)
5. Some animal food was consumed by every group, be it raw milk or products made from it, fish, eggs, beef, pork or insects and reptiles
6. Nuts, grains and seeds were always prepared to neutralize substances in them called anti-nutrients
7. Preparation methods included cooking, soaking, sprouting and fermenting and some animal foods were consumed raw (milk and meat).

8. The amounts of omega 3 and omega 6 oils were about equal. Today that ratio is often 1:20 which has a devastating effect on our cells, particularly in the brain

9. All cultures used animal bones, usually to make bone broths.

These people ate REAL food they took time to prepare with love and care. And that food became their bodies through digestion and assimilation.

Are you eating REAL food? Think it might be time to?

If you see this as possible in your life, good for you, because it is. Large numbers of people are healing themselves by returning to traditional diets. The [Weston A Price Foundation website](#) is a wonderful resource. Each of the above issues will be addressed in detail in future articles on this blog.

Until next time, wishing you Real Food for Real Health so you can be Real Happy

Rethinking the Food Pyramid...



Did you know that after the USDA released the Food Pyramid in

1992 the rate of obesity skyrocketed? That's what happens when you encourage people to consume 6-11 servings a day of grain products without mention of product quality. And yes, there was a major link to the grain lobby. At the same time, the tip of the pyramid made the recommendation to use fats sparingly...no regard for the difference between good and bad fats. No mention of the fact that all our hormones are made from cholesterol.

The pyramid evolved and we were encouraged to eat less grains, make them whole, consume more fruits and veggies, but still eat "lowfat" milk and protein sources. We now have a "plate" as a guide – it's better but does not address the need for high quality fat consumption (so necessary DAILY for cell and brain health) or the processing of grains/nuts/seeds in a manner so our body can better use their nutrients. The issues of pesticide residues, dangers of genetically modified organisms, concern about antibiotics and hormones in our animal products are not mentioned. These issues are real and are negatively effecting our health with every bite.

With so much **mis**-information out there, are you feeling overwhelmed? Feeling misled? Please don't despair. The movement to get back to REAL nutrient dense food is growing exponentially. We will get there one step at a time. Pick a place to start this month. How about finding a local market in your area where you can meet the REAL farmer who grows your food. Or pick one vegetable or fruit in your diet and promise yourself you will only buy it if it's grown organically.

One positive effort by the USDA is the program [Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food](#). This is a step in the right direction to deal with the issues mentioned above. Here in Muskegon County, we are fortunate to have a source for local and organic food called [Sweetwater Local Foods Market](#).

Take that first step.
Just start...

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

Update January 2014 – Denise Minger has now published an amazing book I highly recommend [Death By Food Pyramid](#).
