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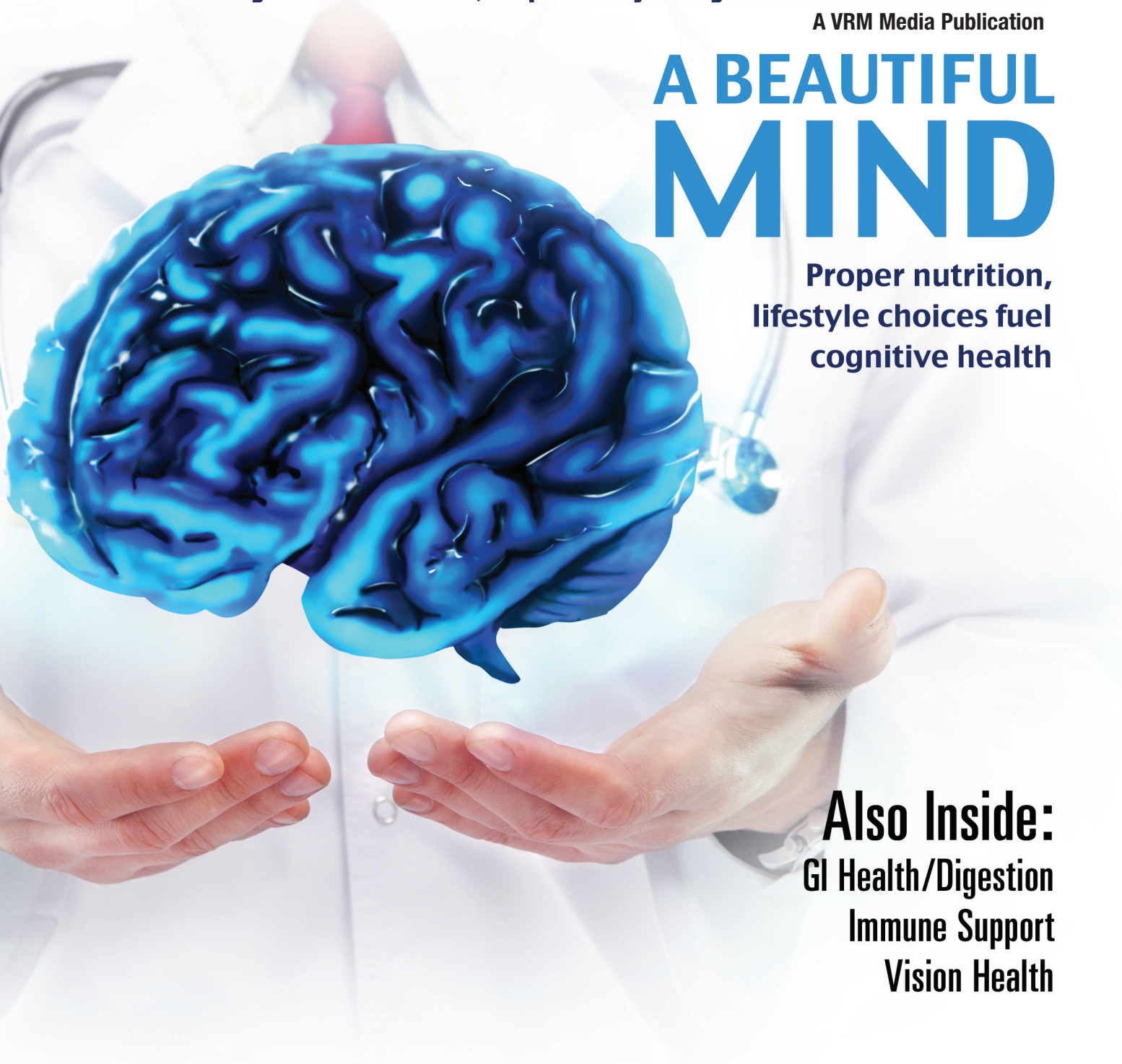
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The Business Magazine for Alternative, Complementary & Integrative Healthcare Professionals

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The Path to Healthy Digestion



A healthy digestive system may be the key to overall wellness.

By Shari Barbanel

Healthy digestion is essential. It is as simple as that. When the body is under digestive distress, a person may encounter symptoms, such as abdominal pain and discomfort, bloating, heartburn, constipation or diarrhea. Digestive issues can result from a number of factors, including eating a poor diet, stress, or intolerances to certain types of food, such as lactose or gluten. And the number of people dealing with digestive issues is staggering. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), digestive diseases affect approximately 60 to 70 million Americans. Additionally, gastrointestinal (GI) issues can have an effect on the rest of the body's systems. For instance, approximately 70 percent

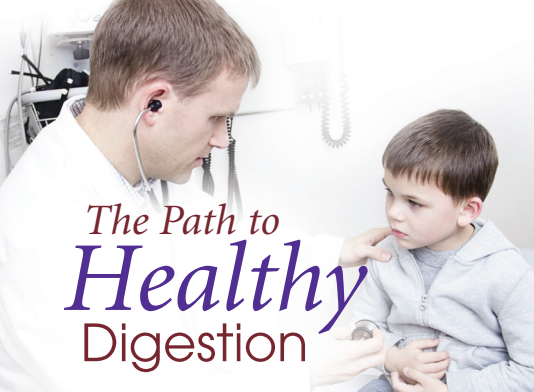
of the immune system resides in GI tract.

"Digestive disturbances are common place now days with symptoms ranging from bloating, indigestion, feeling full soon after eating, lack of appetite, cramping, constipation or loose stools," said Natalie Lamb, nutritional advisor for Maryland-based Bio-Kult Probiotics, which is manufactured in Somerset, U.K. by Probiotics International Ltd. (Protexin). "If symptoms reoccur regularly the label of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is given. IBS is currently estimated to affect between 10 and 20 percent of the general population, with approximately 70 percent experiencing at least one symptom in any year. Food intolerances and allergies are becoming more widespread, and other more

serious conditions experienced include, diverticular disease, Crohn's, ulcerative colitis and pouchitis."

Why So Distressed?

The million-dollar question is, why are digestive issues so prevalent? There are a number of factors that can contribute to the issues that people are having today. According to Dr. Rachel Marynowski, a naturopathic physician that practices at Intonu Wellness in Atlanta, GA, there are many causes of GI issues "beginning with poor in-utero health before a person is even born, C-section delivery, being formula fed, food sensitivities, allergies and intolerances, stress, lack of sleep, excessive energy expenditure, poor dietary



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habits, chronic dehydration, infection and toxic exposure.”

The standard American Diet lives up to its acronym—SAD, as it is high in unhealthy fats and processed foods, low in fiber and plant-based foods, which can wreak havoc on the gut. According to Robert Kay, PhD, chief science office for Florida-based Advanced Naturals, SAD can “affect the digestive system negatively by depleting beneficial gut microbes. And it should be noted that even the ‘healthy’ whole grains turn to sugar in the digestive tract,” he explained. “The SAD diet also tends to be high in unhealthy fats that can be difficult to digest, especially in older adults. Instead, choose high-fiber, low-sugar fruits and vegetables;

Distress Signs

According to Robert Kay, PhD, chief science office for Florida-based Advanced Naturals, one of the most prevalent causes of GI/digestive health issues has to do with the balance of bacteria in the digestive tract. “There are 100 trillion bacteria inside the digestive tract—some good, some bad, some neutral. The balance of these bacteria helps to determine a person’s digestive health, and also their immune and overall health,” he explained. “Beneficial bacteria in the digestive tract help digest food and absorb nutrients, and they help to support the function of the immune system.”

Dr. Kay noted that multitude of factors can negatively impact the balance of bacteria in the gut including:

- **Poor Diet**—The standard American diet (SAD), which is high in sugar, refined carbohydrates, processed meats, unhealthy fats, chemicals and additives, but low in fresh vegetables and naturally fermented foods, can be incredibly disruptive to the balance of bacteria in the digestive system.

- **Aging**—As we age, our levels of certain good bacteria start to decrease, especially *Bifidobacteria* in the large intestine.

- **Antibiotics**—While these drugs can be lifesaving, overuse and misuse of antibiotics is a serious concern. Along with killing pathogenic bacteria, antibiotics also wipe out the beneficial bacteria in the digestive tract.

proteins and healthy fats.”

“We have moved so far away from traditional ways of eating. We buy a lot more processed and fast foods for convenience and eat a lot more sugar than our bodies are used to dealing with,” added Lamb. “Diets high in refined carbohydrates and simple sugars can feed pathogenic bacteria and yeasts. We have lost connection with where our food comes from and simple cooking skills. We often eat in a rush, in front of the TV or computer.”

Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, director of the Practitioners Alliance Network (PAN), author of the popular free Smart Phone app “Cures A-Z,” and a best-selling author, noted that another key issue with problems, such as acid reflux and indigestion, “is the destruction of enzymes that are critical for digestion during food processing, and inadequate stomach acid from aging or excessive use of acid blocker medications,” he said. “For colon problems, such as irritable bowel syndrome or dysbiosis, unhealthy gut bacteria or overgrowth of *Candida* represent the major problems. In addition, inadequate water and fiber

- **Acid-suppressing Medications**—Acid-suppressing medications work by reducing the pH of the stomach, which creates an environment that can favor the development of gut imbalance or dysbiosis. What many people who take antacids do not know is that they may actually have too little acid in the stomach, not too much, as both conditions can create similar symptoms.

- **Stress**—The detrimental effects of stress are often discussed, but what you may not have considered is that stress has an effect on the balance of your gut bacteria as well. Not only does stress lower the levels of good bacteria, it also affects digestive function.

- **Environmental Toxins**—Toxins from the environment are known to destroy friendly bacteria in the gut. Since the middle of the 20th century, we’ve introduced more than 80,000 new chemicals into our air, water, food supply and homes.

- **Yeast Imbalance and Parasites**—When antibiotics kill off our natural probiotic bacteria, another organism that can proliferate is yeast. Yeast imbalance can lead to leaky gut and a host of other health disruptions. Parasites are another potentially invasive intestinal organism that can thrive in an environment that lacks sufficient, friendly bacteria. Parasites can be difficult to detect, and they can trigger a range of digestive symptoms.

contribute to constipation.”

In addition to poor dietary choices and acid blockers, genetics, environmental toxins, prescription drugs, a lack of sleep and chronic stress are factors when it comes to developing digestive issues. Further, digestive issues can affect just about anyone. While aging can be a factor when it comes to developing GI problems, people of all ages can be saddled with GI distress. And with a rise in food intolerances and sensitivities, more attention is being paid to the digestive system.

According to Hamilton Cabanilla, National Educator for Florida-based Enzyme Science, the interest has grown due to more consumers suffering with food intolerances, such as gluten and dairy. “There has also been more interest from those with children, on the brain/gut connection; specifically how poorly digested foods may have an effect on behavior, health and more,” Cabanilla said.

A Natural Transition

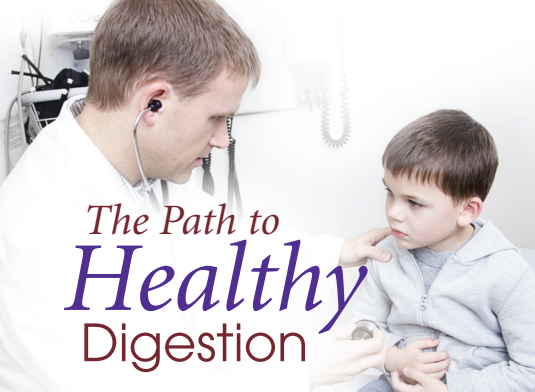
Many Americans are now looking beyond convention treatments for digestive distress, because they only address the symptoms, not the cause. Cabanilla noted that common treatments have been to block or inhibit stomach acid and the use of laxatives, and that methods have fallen out of favor with many because they only mask the symptoms of the problem. “Standard treatment is prolonged use of acid blockers. Research is showing that these medications are addictive, and also trigger severe osteoporosis and nutritional deficiencies,” added Dr. Teitelbaum. “This is leading to the realization that we have stomach acid for a reason, and turning it off long term is a major mistake. In addition, there is growing realization that indigestion is not from too much stomach acid, but rather from poor digestion.”

“The best and only approach is to determine the root cause of dysfunction,” said Dr. Marynowski. “Once discovered, a treatment protocol can be tailored to meet the needs of that individual.”

According to Dr. Marynowski, the treatment plan should include proper hydration, suggesting that a person should drink half their body weight in ounces of room temperature water daily. “This is key in supporting tissues of the GI tract, as well as in moving foods and wastes throughout the entire gut tube (and it’s long!),” she explained. Dietary modification and food elimination are also common treatment suggestions.”

In addition to dietary modification, Dr. Marynowski recommends pre- and probiotics, as well as anti-inflammatories, such as essential fatty acids and curcumin, nutrients to help rebuild the GI lining if compromised,

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including glutamine, vitamin A, as well as other anti-inflammatories.

“Probiotics are a natural component of a healthy digestive tract, and today’s modern lifestyles tend to get our good bacteria out of balance,” said Gregory Leyer, PhD, chief scientific officer for UAS Labs in Wisconsin.

“Supplementing the diet with probiotics is an excellent way to maintain or restore intestinal health as more and more data continue to point to the role of a healthy microbiota (microbial intestinal community) and digestive health. In my experience, probiotics are one of the go-to’s that a patient should have at their disposal.”



Bio-Kult offers a number of products for digestive health, including Bio-Kult Advanced 14-strain, Bio-Kult Infantis and Bio-Kult Candea. “The main benefits of the Bio-Kult product range are that they are multi-strain probiotics providing a wide range of benefits, do not need to be refrigerated, have a guaranteed two-year shelf life, are proven to survive the stomach acidity and reach the intestine intact and are backed with a growing portfolio of research,” Lamb said.

According to the company, Bio-Kult Advanced 14-strain is a unique multi-strain probiotic with 14 strains of beneficial bacteria. Bio-Kult Infantis is a scientifically-developed, advanced probiotic formula for babies, toddlers and young children. Lastly, Bio-Kult Candea is a multi-strain probiotic supplement with added garlic and grapefruit seed extract. Taken daily, it could help strengthen the body’s natural defenses against Candida overgrowth, and may help to prevent it changing from its yeast-like form to the invasive filamentous fungus form.

Like probiotics, digestive enzymes help promote healthy digestion. According to Cabanilla, Enzyme Science produces digestive enzyme/probiotic combinations, as well as different enzyme products for

specific food intolerances. For instance, the company’s Complete Digestion and Critical Digestion are full spectrum digestive enzyme/probiotic products that have enzymes to cover every food substrate in a typical meal, including proteins, carbohydrates, fats, etc. It also contains a Lactobacillus Acidophilus DDS-1 and ATP (adenosine triphosphate), while the Identify products (Identify Bean and Veggie, Identify Dairy, Identify Gluten) are more specialized for the food intolerances indicated in the product name. Enzyme Science also offers Acid Calm, which helps soothe and coat the intestinal tract, stimulate GI rebuilding, and provide relief of occasional symptoms of indigestion, acid reflux and heartburn.

“Natural approaches such as the use of enzymes and probiotics may get to the root of digestive disturbances and contribute to more optimal digestive function instead of just masking symptoms while the causes continue or possibly worsen,” said Cabanilla.

“Optimizing digestion may also improve overall health. By absorbing more nutrients out of our foods, we give our body more fuel and building blocks to sustain life. We also get rid of waste in a more optimal manner. Digestion is the foundation of overall health.”

In addition to probiotics and digestive enzymes, Advanced Naturals’ Dr. Kay noted that fiber is also highly recommended for good digestive health, as well as healthy fats. And while it is ideal to obtain these nutrients from food sources, it is often not possible. “It can be difficult to consume all of the foods and nutrients our bodies require, so along with a healthy diet, we recommend taking digestive supplements, such as high-fiber formulas, omega-3 fish oils, high-potency, multi-strain probiotics and plant-based digestive enzymes every day,*” he explained.

Support System

It is said that knowledge is power and the more information that a practitioner can pass on to the patient, the better. Manufacturers can assist their practitioner partners by offering information, trainings and other services that, in the end—will benefit the patient.

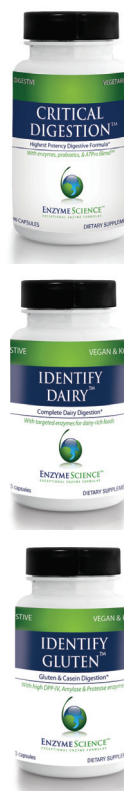
Enzyme Science provides practitioners with literature they can share with

their patients, along with samples of the products so the patient can try the products before buying. The company also has an education department available to conduct phone or online trainings with its practitioner partners. “We feel that education is the key. The better the practitioner understands digestion and how natural supplements may support good dietary choices and nutrition, the better he can incorporate and suggest natural products to his patients.”

And according to Dr. Marynowski, patients can greatly benefit from their community of natural health practitioners working together to help them get well. “The old adage ‘there is a time and place for everything’ also applies to health care,” she concluded. “I believe there are many types of wonderful practitioners...medical doctors, chiropractors, naturopathic doctors, acupuncturists, cranial sacral therapists, colon hydrotherapists, health coaches—and so on. In bringing as many modalities together as possible to care for a single person, now that’s comprehensive!

In doing so, we can combine the best of traditional or conventional treatment with that of the alternative or natural varietal.”

**These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.*



- According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), digestive diseases affect approximately 60 to 70 million Americans.
- Approximately 70 percent of the immune system rides in GI tract.
- Poor dietary choices, acid blockers genetics, environmental toxins, prescription drugs, a lack of sleep and chronic stress are factors when it comes to developing digestive issues.

Healthy Take Aways

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Advanced Naturals, (800) 690-9988, www.advancednaturals.com
- Bio-Kult, (800) 899-3413, www.bio-kult.com
- Enzyme Science, (855) 281-7246, www.enzyscience.com
- Master Supplements, (800) 926-2961, x 1, www.master-supplements.com
- UAS Labs, (715) 849-3333, www.uaslabs.com