

Compassion Primary Care Gut Health Guide

*Understanding symptoms,
causes, testing, and treatment
options*



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Nursing your journey to lasting wellness.

My Why

Hello, I'm Dr. Stasha-Gae Roberts, nurse practitioner and owner of Compassion Primary Care. If you're reading this, chances are you've been dealing with persistent digestive discomfort (bloating, pain, or fatigue) that's affecting your daily life. You may have visited multiple providers, completed countless tests, and even tried medications that didn't bring relief. I want you to know you're not alone.

I understand how frustrating and isolating it can feel when your symptoms aren't taken seriously or explained clearly.

Early in my own journey, I experienced brain fog, insomnia, joint pain, and gut symptoms that didn't make sense, even with "normal" labs. Despite my training as a nurse practitioner, I realized conventional medicine wasn't giving me the full picture.

That realization sparked my deeper pursuit of integrative and functional medicine. As I expanded my training, I also began investigating my own symptoms. Advanced stool testing revealed gut dysbiosis and leaky gut. Food sensitivity testing uncovered several foods that were quietly triggering inflammation.

My Why

Through a tailored healing protocol, I began to feel clearer, lighter, and more energized.

Looking back, I now recognize that even as a teen and young adult, I was likely experiencing food sensitivities and gut inflammation that contributed to my severe menstrual pain, something no one connected at the time.

Today, after years of personal and professional experience, my goal is to help others find answers faster and reclaim their health. Healing the gut takes time, dedication, and partnership, but it's one of the most transformative investments you can make in your overall well-being.

Thank you for downloading this guide. I hope it brings you clarity and confidence as you begin your own healing journey.



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How to use this guide

Nearly one in four Americans struggles with chronic digestive issues. Imbalances in the gut can affect far more than digestion; they can influence mood, hormones, skin, metabolism, and immune function.

This guide is designed to help you understand the “why” behind your symptoms and give you an overview of how integrative medicine approaches gut healing. Inside, you’ll find information about:

- Common gut conditions such as IBS, SIBO, lactose intolerance, and dysbiosis
- Contributing factors that drive imbalance
- Testing and treatment options available through a personalized care plan

Use this guide as a starting point, jot down your symptoms, highlight what resonates, and bring it to your appointment so we can discuss your unique experience together.



Why Gut Health Matters

Your gut is the foundation of your health. It influences:

- **Digestion & nutrient absorption**
- **Immune balance & inflammation control**
- **Hormone production & detoxification**
- **Mood, focus, and energy**
- **Skin and metabolic health**

When the gut is imbalanced, it can lead to bloating, constipation, diarrhea, food sensitivities, fatigue, brain fog, hormonal symptoms, or even autoimmune reactions. By restoring balance, you often see improvements across your whole body — not just in your digestion.



"When your gut is healthy, your whole body thrives."

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

- Affects roughly 11% of people worldwide
- In the U.S., about 25–45 million people live with IBS (most under age 50, and more often women)
- Annual cost: over \$10 billion in medical expenses and \$19 billion in lost productivity
- Fewer than half seek medical care

What is IBS?

IBS is a functional digestive disorder that causes chronic abdominal pain and altered bowel habits — without visible structural damage. It includes three main subtypes:

- IBS-C (Constipation-predominant) – infrequent, hard stools
- IBS-D (Diarrhea-predominant) – frequent, loose stools
- IBS-M (Mixed type) – alternating constipation and diarrhea

Common Symptoms:

- Chronic abdominal pain
- Gas, bloating, or distension
- Constipation, diarrhea, or both
- Nausea or indigestion
- Urgency with bowel movements



Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

Root Causes:

IBS can stem from gut-brain communication problems, motility issues, infections, dysbiosis, inflammation, or food sensitivities. Stress and mood changes can further disrupt gut signaling, making symptoms worse.

Diagnosis:

Diagnosis involves ruling out other causes (through bloodwork and stool tests), meeting Rome IV criteria, and sometimes completing specialty testing for SIBO or food sensitivities.

Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO)

SIBO occurs when bacteria that normally live in the large intestine begin growing in the small intestine. This leads to premature fermentation of food, gas production, bloating, and malabsorption.

Subtypes:

- **Hydrogen-dominant:** Often linked with diarrhea
- **Methane-dominant (IMO):** Often linked with constipation
- **Hydrogen sulfide-dominant:** Can cause pain, diarrhea, and inflammation

Symptoms:

Bloating, gas, abdominal pain, nausea, irregular stools, fatigue, joint pain, brain fog, and food sensitivities

Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO)

Testing:

A breath test measures hydrogen, methane, and hydrogen sulfide gases after consuming a sugar solution.

A rise of ≥ 20 ppm hydrogen within 90 minutes suggests SIBO.

Treatment:

Targeted antimicrobial therapy (herbal or prescription), nutritional support, and lifestyle changes to restore motility and prevent recurrence.

Lactose Intolerance

Lactose intolerance occurs when your body produces too little of the enzyme lactase, which breaks down milk sugar. Undigested lactose ferments in the colon, causing gas, bloating, cramping, and diarrhea.

Diagnosis:

- Elimination/re-challenge
- Hydrogen breath test
- Stool acidity test in children

Management:

Some people tolerate up to 12–15 g of lactose daily.

Choose lower-lactose foods like hard cheeses, Greek yogurt, or lactose-free milk.

Lactase enzyme supplements can also help.



Gut Dysbiosis

What it is:

An imbalance in your gut microbiome, too many harmful bacteria, not enough beneficial ones, or bacteria living where they shouldn't (such as the small intestine).

Common Signs:

- Gas, bloating, diarrhea, or constipation
- Fatigue or brain fog
- Skin breakouts or rashes
- Joint pain or inflammation
- Food sensitivities
- Mood changes or sleep disturbances

Contributing Factors:

Poor diet, chronic stress, infections, antibiotics, environmental toxins, and even oral health.

Common Contributors to Gut Imbalance

Diet

Highly processed foods, added sugars, and poor-quality fats promote inflammation and harmful bacteria. A fiber-poor diet starves beneficial microbes. Many people also have hidden sensitivities to gluten, dairy, soy, or peanuts that quietly drive inflammation.

Infections

Food poisoning or contaminated water can disrupt the gut for months, sometimes leading to long-term dysbiosis or IBS-like symptoms.

Antibiotic & Medication Use

Antibiotics wipe out both harmful and beneficial bacteria. Chronic antacid (PPI) use can lower stomach acid, weakening natural defense barriers and promoting bacterial overgrowth.

Common Contributors to Gut Imbalance

Lifestyle Factors

Stress, lack of sleep, alcohol, and smoking all damage gut integrity and alter the microbiome. Elevated cortisol (your stress hormone) increases intestinal permeability, commonly called leaky gut

Dental Hygiene

Gut health begins in the mouth. Gum inflammation or poor oral hygiene can introduce bacteria that disrupt gut balance and trigger immune reactions.

Testing: Finding Clarity

At Compassion Primary Care, testing isn't about guessing; it's about understanding your body's unique blueprint.

Comprehensive options **may** include:

- **Advanced stool analysis** (pathogens, dysbiosis, inflammation, digestion markers)
- **SIBO/IMO breath testing**
- **Food sensitivity and intolerance testing**
- **Nutrient panels** (iron, B12, vitamin D, folate, zinc)
- **Cortisol rhythm assessment** (stress-gut connection)
- **Inflammatory markers** (e.g., fecal calprotectin)

These results help tailor your care plan and track your progress over time.

Treatment the Path to Healing

Healing the gut is a step-by-step process that requires time, patience, and consistency.

At Compassion Primary Care, treatment typically involves four key phases:

- Calm Symptoms
 - Short-term elimination or low-FODMAP diets
 - Anti-inflammatory nutrition and appropriate fiber
 - Herbal or natural symptom-soothing supports
- Target Root Causes
 - Address infections, dysbiosis, or SIBO using herbal or prescription antimicrobials
 - Balance digestive secretions (enzymes, bile, stomach acid)



Treatment the Path to Healing

- Restore the Gut-Brain Axis
 - Support healthy motility (ginger, meal spacing, gentle exercise)
 - Manage stress and sleep to regulate cortisol
- Prevent Relapse
 - Gradually reintroduce foods
 - Maintain microbiome diversity with fiber and probiotics
 - Continue lifestyle and nutrition support

*“Healing the gut isn’t a quick fix , it’s a partnership
between you and your body.”*



Nutrition that Loves Your Gut

Focus on:

- 4–5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily
- 25–30 g of fiber per day
- Whole grains, legumes, and colorful produce
- Fermented foods: kefir, yogurt, sauerkraut, kimchi, miso
- Herbs and spices: turmeric, garlic, ginger, cinnamon, and pepper
- Hydration: half your body weight in ounces of water daily
- Quality protein (grass fed / finished; wild caught for meats)
- Good fats

Limit:

- Added sugars
- Alcohol and ultra-processed foods
- Artificial sweeteners
- Seed oils

“Every bite is information for your body. Choose foods that help you heal.”

Supplements & Botanicals Often Considered

(Under clinician supervision)

- **L-Glutamine:** Fuel for healing the gut lining
- **Zinc Carnosine:** Supports mucosal integrity
- **Vitamin D:** Immune and barrier support
- **Probiotics/Prebiotics:** Rebuild microbial balance
- **DGL (Licorice Extract):** Soothes and protects the GI lining
- **Antimicrobial Botanicals:** Berberine, oregano, neem, allicin (for SIBO/dysbiosis)



Next Steps

Healing your gut takes time — but you don't have to do it alone.

Here's how to begin:

- Complete the Gut Health Survey on our website (\$100, applied to your program).
- Schedule your free consultation to review your symptoms and discuss personalized next steps.
- Begin your tailored program — designed to uncover the root cause and restore balance.

“You deserve to feel vibrant, energized, and at home in your body again. Let's start your journey to lasting wellness.”



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Disclaimer

This guide is for educational purposes and not a substitute for medical advice. Always consult a qualified healthcare professional before starting or changing any treatment plan.