

What is Leaky Gut Syndrome?

Leaky gut syndrome in conjunction with autism is still being researched; a number of studies and research are under way to better understand how the syndrome starts, why it can be prevalent in autistic children, and how to treat it. Simply, leaky gut syndrome is the inability of the intestinal wall to keep out large, unwanted molecules. This symptom of autism most often signifies that the intestinal wall has been altered to become permeable. Leaky gut syndrome in autistic children may occur because of increased sensitivity or allergies.

Leaky gut syndrome is problematic for one's health because it allows molecules and substances (such as proteins) that are normally filtered out of the intestinal tract into the intestines. Because these molecules are not usually allowed inside the gut, the body misinterprets these non-harmful substances as a virus or infection and begins to produce antibodies to attack them. In turn, this creates a process where one's body recognizes certain foods, as well as any of the body's regular molecules that are similar to these foods, as harmful, causing an auto-immune disease where the body attacks itself. These are merely two possible outcomes with leaky gut syndrome. Others include the transportation of bacteria normally found within the intestinal tract to move into the bloodstream and cause an infection anywhere in the body as well as a weakening of the liver, which causes more toxins to circulate throughout the body, leading to a number of medical problems.

What can cause leaky gut syndrome? Researchers are still working to more fully understand the causes, but current medical diagnoses suggest that a diet high in alcohol and caffeine intake, certain drugs like ibuprofen and antacids, or a diet high in carbohydrates can decrease the thickness of the intestinal wall as well as other possible reasons. These are just a few possible reasons, and ways to treat leaky gut syndrome are just as uncertain as the reasons. Because of the sensitivity of the digestive system with leaky gut syndrome, many parents of autistic children find that putting their child on gluten- and casein-free diets can help. Both gluten and casein are proteins, and a diet with these proteins may irritate and inflame a leaky gut syndrome - though at the moment, researchers are still studying this. You may also treat leaky gut syndrome by avoiding alcohol, caffeine, ibuprofen, or spicy foods - all of which can cause irritation in the intestines.

Understanding leaky gut syndrome is an ongoing process, for parents with autistic children, doctors, and researchers, but this does not mean that there is nothing you can do to treat it. Simply being aware that your autistic child may have leaky gut syndrome will help you to better understand and improve his or her life.

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