



## Middle School Guidance Officer Report



### **Ten Ways to Potentially End Depression Through Diet:**

It would be foolish to believe that depression can be overcome with a single solution. But for some people, the light at the end of the tunnel shines in a very surprising place. It certainly did for me. Healing my depression came with healing my gastrointestinal tract—my gut. When I became a nutrition student in 1992, I had a lot of healing to do.

I had the irritable bowel from hell. No treatment had worked: not conventional medicine, nor the truly woo-woo stuff. What I discovered, as a student, was that I had something called a “leaky gut”. Cue much hilarity at that. The term leaky gut conjures up an image of cartoonish pseudoscience. But when given its scientific nomenclature—“intestinal permeability”—the idea immediately gains credibility. Furthermore, the scientific evidence for the association between gut health and brain health is strong and gathering momentum.

### **An Action Plan:**

**Take probiotics:** First, I started taking probiotics—supplements containing friendly bacteria to fight the unfriendly. Probiotics also strengthen tight junctions and produce anti-inflammatory chemicals. Probiotics are shaping up to be the medicine of the future. Not only can they improve the health of the gut, they can also have remarkable effects on the mind.

**Eliminate sugar and refined carbohydrates:** Sugar is the enemy of health in so many ways. Sugary foods and drinks trigger the release of large amounts of the hormone insulin, which itself is a trigger for inflammation. The more insulin, the more inflammation. Refined carbohydrates are, essentially, sugars. White bread, rice, pasta, chips, crisps and other savory snacks are all broken down to glucose in the gut, before being absorbed into the blood and raising insulin levels.

**Drastically reduce refined vegetable oils:** This means checking labels obsessively. Because inflammatory omega-6 vegetable oils are ubiquitous in ready-made meals and take-out, it might be easier to cook all your food from scratch—using extra virgin olive oil, butter or coconut oil. Coconut oil and butter are predominantly saturated, and remain stable at high temperatures. So too is extra virgin olive oil, which is predominantly monounsaturated.

**Avoid alcohol:** I put myself on a self-imposed ban of alcohol. Alcohol is a well-known depressant, gut irritant and contributor to leaky gut syndrome.

**Increase vegetable intake:** I added as many vegetables as I could manage—especially the brightly coloured ones, including peppers, tomatoes, red onions and eggplants. I made sure that I also ate at least one portion each day of dark leafy greens, such as cabbage, broccoli and spinach. All these vegetables are loaded with antioxidants that fight damaging free radicals, and plant chemicals that fight inflammation. They are also a source of ‘prebiotics’, nutrients that feed the friendly bacteria in your gut and encourage their growth and activity.

**Include fermented foods in your diet:** Foods such as live yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and pickled vegetables increase your levels of lactic acid bacteria such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus*. This



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helps restore the microbial balance that is off-kilter in those of us with dysbiosis and “leaky gut”.

**Eat oily fish:** Patients with depression have been found to have lower blood omega-3 fatty acids than non-depressed people. The importance of omega-3 fats to brain health cannot be overstated: they are involved in brain development, mood and cognitive function from pre-birth to old age. Salmon, trout, mackerel, herring, anchovies and sardines are rich in anti-inflammatory omega-3 oils, which work in opposition to the pro-inflammatory omega-6 oils found in processed foods. As part of my regime, I ate oily fish, and just for good measure took a daily fish oil supplement.

**Avoid allergens:** If you know a certain food gives you trouble, avoid it. If you are not sure, you might try avoiding foods containing gluten and see if it helps. Gluten has a long association with leaky gut. Gluten is found in wheat, barley and rye.

**Don't graze in between meals:** Prolonged breaks between meals—a form of intermittent fasting—can lower markers of inflammation. You don't have to do anything drastic—just stop unnecessary grazing between meals, and only eat when you are hungry. Giving your digestive system a rest gives it time to heal.

**Review your medications:** Determine if you are taking NSAIDs. If you are, discuss alternative medications with your physician.

Read More: [Ten ways to Potentially End Depression Through Diet](#)

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