



# 4-Week

# Gut Reset

An Integrative Gastroenterologist's Guide To Gut Health & Longevity

By Dr. Marvin Singh, M.D.

[www.DrMarvinSingh.com](http://www.DrMarvinSingh.com)

# Contents

The science of gut health	3
How to heal your gut	5
What to eat for better digestion	6
A 4-week gut-healing plan	7
How to have healthy digestion for life	10
Meet Dr. Marvin Singh, M.D.	11



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# The Science Of Gut Health

There's so much confusion over how to be well, even a sane person could go crazy. *Should we eat carbs? Is gluten still bad? Are eggs a health food or not?* In this e-book I cut through the chaos, giving you the real science on gut health and a simple, 4-week action plan for better digestion. Are you ready to heal your gut? Let's get started.

You've probably heard it before, but all disease really does begin in the gut. Hippocrates, well-known as the father of modern medicine, was the first to utter those words and while he may not have realized exactly to what extent—boy was he right! As an integrative gastroenterologist that sees patients every single day, I know better than anyone that our gut is either the thing keeping us healthy or the thing making us sick. But when we say gut health, what do we really mean? Mostly, we are referring to the health of the gut microbiome, or the ecosystem of tens of trillions of bacteria, fungi, and viruses that live in our digestive tract.



Think of your gut as a metropolis for these little bugs, whose cells actually outnumber your own. In fact, there is 100 times more microbial DNA in your gut than there is human DNA in your whole body. Crazy, isn't it? It's pretty clear the microbiome is a formidable force. And it doesn't end there! The gut also contains something called the metabolome, which is basically all the chemicals (also known as metabolites) that go along with the microbes. The metabolome is what makes the wheels turn, determining whether good things or bad things are happening in your gut.

Another important aspect of a healthy gut is the layer of cells that line the digestive tract. These cells are connected by structures called tight junctions, which when they are injured in some way—such as from a poor diet, stress, medications, or an imbalance in the microbiome—become more permeable. This is bad news, allowing food particles, bacteria, and other chemicals to sneak into the bloodstream. When this happens, our immune system reacts, launching an attack against these “foreign invaders.” This issue is also known as “leaky gut” or “[increased intestinal permeability](#)” and is a huge contributor to poor gut health and chronic inflammation.



## Why you want to heal your gut

My patients often ask me why it's important to heal the gut. What I tell them is that our gut houses over 70% of our immune system and is deeply connected to important bodily systems, even ones that seem unrelated to digestion, such as neurotransmitter production and our metabolism.

By creating balance in the gut microbiome and preventing leaky gut, we can also directly influence the degree of inflammation that's present in our body and the development (or reversal) of [chronic diseases](#).

What diseases am I talking about? Anything from allergies, Alzheimer's dementia, anxiety and depression to asthma, autism, autoimmune conditions, cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome, heart disease, diabetes, Parkinson's disease, thyroid disease, and small intestinal bacterial overgrowth—just to name a few.

So how do we maintain a healthy microbiome and prevent increased intestinal permeability? In the gut health world, there's a lot of focus on killing "bad" bugs and replacing them with "good" bugs, also known as probiotics. But the truth is, it actually matters less what the individual characters in the microbiome are doing and more how the collective system is functioning. Having a few "bad" guys in the room won't always hurt you.

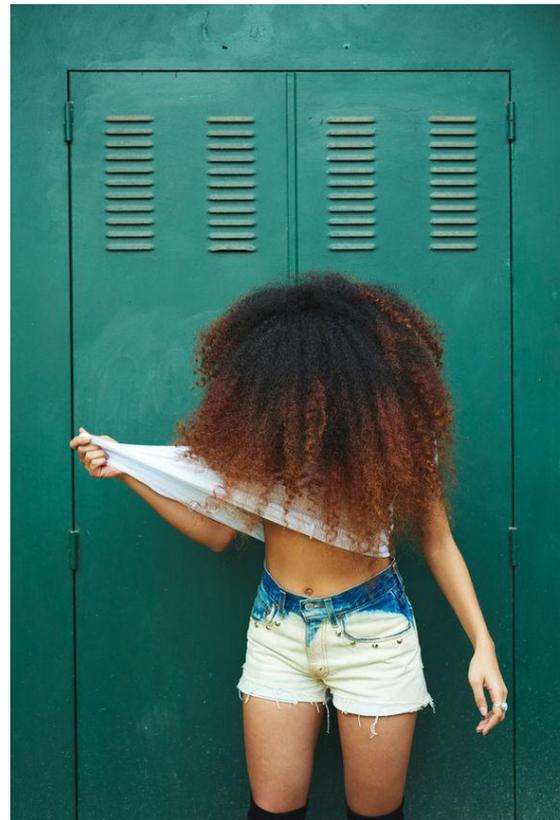
A good example of this is *C. diff* (short for *Clostridium difficile*), one of the most famous "bad bacteria." It's often thought that if you have *C. diff*, you automatically have a huge problem. But the truth is, I might have *C. diff* in my colon (and you might too!) without having any symptoms at all. That said, if the tides turn and you have to take antibiotics or become immune suppressed, it could be enough to shift the balance in the ecosystem; that *C. diff* could go from quietly doing nothing to producing a toxin that could make you severely ill.

When we say we want to "heal the gut," we don't mean a digestive tract with heaps of great bacteria and zero bad ones. We simply want to establish a system that's tilted towards doing good. In other words: strive for health—not perfection.

# How To Heal Your Gut

Now that we know what a healthy gut looks and feels like, and why it's so important to keep our guts healthy for life, how do we go about it? In this plan we'll be taking a holistic approach, which means avoiding toxins, exercising, sleeping well, reducing stress, and enjoying social connections *as well as* focusing on nutrition. It might seem strange that these things would be part of a gut health plan, but there's solid science telling us that all these factors impact the gut microbiome as much as our diet. If you are under too much stress, the gut microbiome can go haywire just as if you were eating fast food every other day. Yes, really.

So what does this mean for you for the next 4 weeks? It means you're going to revamp your whole lifestyle—not just the way you eat—to heal your gut. The good news is that a little goes a long way. When you start making healthy lifestyle choices, your microbiome responds positively almost immediately. As a result, the metabolome is modulated and you start filling your body with beneficial antioxidants and chemicals. At the same time, your immune system becomes stronger and you're able to modify gene expression in a positive way. When things go well, the whole system prospers. In fact, [one study showed](#) that among those who practice four or more healthy lifestyle behaviors, there is a 66% lower all-cause mortality compared to those with unhealthy lifestyle behaviors. Just think about that for a second: If you practice healthy habits, you have a substantially reduced risk of dying from any cause.



You might be thinking: *This is all well and good Dr. Singh—but what will I be eating for the next four weeks?* I get it. We know that diet is the key to health, especially when it comes to our digestion. So what diet is best for gut health? There's a great deal of data on this topic and it can feel like a windstorm of opinions and conflicting information. For example, we know that the Mediterranean diet [helps decrease](#) *E.coli* (one of those “bad bacteria”) in the gut and helps increase numbers of helpful bacteria. That said, there are also studies showing that a vegan diet, carnivorous diet, paleo diet, SCD diet, GAPS diet, and many more are also good for you. The truth is that there is *no best diet for gut health*, especially when we're thinking long-term. This is why I always recommend working with a nutrition-savvy healthcare provider to nail down the best diet for you based on your unique needs (more on that on page 10). That said, there are some key nutrition principles—and tools like the keto diet and intermittent fasting—that we can all take advantage of to get our gut health back on track. On the next page, I'll give you an exact list of foods to eat and foods to avoid during the 4 week plan.

# What To Eat For Better Digestion

You're almost ready to get started! Here's a list of what to eat and what to avoid while on the 4-Week Gut Reset plan. The basic principle here is to avoid inflammatory, microbiome-disrupting foods. Want a pro tip? Get familiar with these foods and stock up on them before Day 1. You'll likely be fatigued during the first week and probably won't feeling like shopping.

## What to eat:

*Stick to fresh, low-carb foods including low-glycemic vegetables and fruits, healthy fats, and clean meats. Go organic and non-GMO as much as possible.*

- Wild caught Alaskan Salmon
- Sardines
- Shrimp
- Grass fed, organic beef
- Organic chicken
- Organic turkey
- Avocado
- Free range, organic eggs
- Nuts (macadamia and walnuts are my favorite)
- Arugula
- Spinach
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Zucchini
- Brussel sprouts
- Cabbage
- Celery
- Kale
- Blackberries
- Raspberries
- Blueberries
- Extra virgin olive oil and olives
- Grass fed butter or ghee (in moderation)
- Sparkling mineral water
- Unsweetened herbal teas
- Bone broth
- Grass fed, organic hard cheese

## What to avoid:

*Stay away from processed and refined foods, starchy foods, carbs, grains, sugars (of all kinds), and inflammatory fats.*

- Chickpeas
- Lentils
- Sweet potatoes
- Bananas
- Pineapples
- Oranges
- Grapes
- Mangoes
- Dried fruits
- Honey
- Agave nectar
- Cane sugar
- Artificial sweeteners
- High fructose corn syrup (I recommend cutting this one out for good)
- Sodas (diet or regular)
- Fruit juices
- Beer/wine/cocktails
- Hot dogs and bacon
- Processed lunch meat
- Fast food of any kind
- Vegetable oils
- Candy
- Bread/wheat
- Muffins, cakes, pastas
- Peas
- Corn
- White rice

# WEEK 1

Despite what you may have seen advertised, there's no quick fix to heal your gut. But you can make a lot of progress in just one month! By following this 4-week program, you can get back on the path of health and wellness. This week is all about setting a healthy foundation and doing a hard reset on the gut microbiome.

1. **Start your journal:** Imagine yourself four weeks from now, on the last day of the 4-week plan. Write down how it feels and how you see yourself getting there. What motivates you? What is your "why" and what do you want to accomplish? Make this the first entry in the journal that you will keep throughout your journey.
2. **Clean out your pantry:** You've already stocked up on fresh foods, but it's also a good idea to get the "avoid" foods out of sight. Rid your pantry of anything with added sugar and say goodbye to processed and/or packaged foods. Only keep healthy pantry foods like nuts and spices.
3. **Consider going keto:** If you don't have any contraindications, consider making the ketogenic diet part of your plan. This is a low-carb, moderate-protein, high-fat diet. If you're not able to do the ketogenic diet because of a health issue or other factor, don't fret. You can still reset and reboot! You may need to adjust your macros by eating less fat and more healthy carbs. You can also be a little stricter on when it comes to fasting (which you'll start in Week 2).
4. **Get plenty of sleep:** Make sure you are getting enough sleep and rest. You'll likely feel fatigued this week and if you are sleep deprived, your body will be screaming for carbs!
5. **Stay hydrated:** Make sure you stay hydrated and drink more water than you would normally. You can also add some salt and electrolytes for an added mineral boost.
6. **Supplement with magnesium:** Consider taking a magnesium supplement for this first week; this may also help keep regular because people can sometimes get constipated when changing their eating habits. I recommend about 200 mg of magnesium citrate each day.
7. **Eat your veggies:** Everyone should strive to eat plenty of leafy greens and vegetables while on a ketogenic diet. They are low-carb and chock full of important nutrients.

## The Ketogenic Diet As A Wellness Tool

From afar, the ketogenic diet can seem extreme or unattainable (*I mean, is a life without carbs really a life at all?*). I'm a realist, which means I recognize the benefits of the keto diet and also recognize that most people cannot maintain such a restrictive diet for long. That's why on this plan we're using the keto diet as a short-term *therapeutic tool*, instead of a long-term lifestyle plan. This allows you to take advantage of the benefits of ketosis before adopting a more flexible way of eating once the 4 weeks are over.

Speaking of the benefits of ketosis ... we now have evidence that the ketogenic diet can increase the microbial diversity in the gut, reduce blood sugar levels, and lower weight by increasing helpful bacteria like *Akkermansia muciniphila* and *Lactobacillus*. At the same time, it reduces pro-inflammatory microbes like *Desulfovibrio* and *Turicibacter*. After 6 months on a ketogenic diet, [one study showed](#) that the bacterial richness rebounded in those with multiple sclerosis.

It's a common misconception that you have to be a meat eater to do the ketogenic diet. In fact, you can even be a vegan and take advantage of the health benefits of this diet! You are not eating higher than normal amounts of animal protein. In fact, you want to eat a standard amount of protein, around 20% of your daily calorie intake. Your carbohydrate intake should be around 5% and the rest is healthy fats like salmon, avocado, and olive oil.

# WEEK 2

You made it through the first week, which is definitely the hardest of the four. Week two is all about upping the ante by adding supplements, experimenting with intermittent fasting, and getting back to your exercise routine.

1. **Check on your progress:** By now, you should be in full swing with the ketogenic diet and you are likely wondering how close to nutritional ketosis you are. You will want to monitor your progress with a ketone meter (preferably using a blood spot result).
2. **Introduce fasting:** Similar to the ketogenic diet, we'll be using fasting as a therapeutic tool during this 4-week plan. It can feel intimidating from afar, but fasting doesn't have to be extreme. Start simple by leaving a 12-hour window of time between dinner and breakfast the next morning. Ideally, by the end of the 4 weeks you will have increased this to a 16-hour window (but go at your own pace).
3. **Make time:** Look at your schedule and block off 30 minutes for at least three days during the week when you can exercise and get that heart pumping. Bonus points if you do something outdoors!
4. **Add supplements:** Go for a nice multi-vitamin with plenty of B vitamins. Milk thistle and NAC are great options to support the detoxification process. Vitamin D, omega-3s (especially if you're not eating fish regularly) and turmeric are also helpful to add to your routine.
5. **Be kind to yourself:** If you get derailed and fall off the wagon, it's no big deal. Just start over with the 4 week plan and go from there.

## The Science of Fasting

You've probably heard chatter about intermittent fasting. It's a key concept in health, wellness, and longevity—and we're using it as a tool to restore healthy digestion in this plan. But what does the science say about fasting and the microbiome?

A [recent study showed](#) that every-other-day fasting can selectively activate beige fat, which is key to weight loss, by shaping the gut microbiome and shifting its metabolomics.

Another study [demonstrated](#) how fasting-mimicking diet cycles were able to reduce intestinal inflammation, increase stem cell number, stimulate protective gut microbes, and reverse intestinal pathology caused by a chemically induced colitis. Isn't that fascinating?

Fasting isn't just about restricting caloric intake or losing water weight. It's about renewing and resetting your metabolism, and using your gut microbiome to make it happen.



# WEEK 3

Congrats! You're halfway there. This week, it's time to focus on diversity in the foods you're eating. It's also time to get out there and be social if you've been isolating yourself. No more putting your life on hold!



1. **Go for diversity:** Make sure you're not eating the same thing over and over again. It's easy to find a few good recipes and get stuck on them for weeks on end. If you do this, you'll inevitably get bored and slip up. Eat a wide variety of colorful vegetables and low-glycemic fruits, like berries.
2. **Take a mindful moment:** This is a good time to start practicing some mindfulness if you don't already have a go-to practice. I love doing breathwork. The 4-7-8 breath is a great, relaxing practice to help you feel grounded, present, and in the moment. (Here's [a video](#) that shows exactly how it's done.)
3. **Get social:** Make sure you take some time to hang out with friends. You are at the midway point and you should remind yourself that this isn't a punishment. Invite your friends to get an herbal tea or go for a walk and celebrate the fact that you are in the driver's seat and on the path to wellness.
4. **Incorporate tea into your routine:** Speaking of tea, make sure you're drinking anti-inflammatory teas like green tea and oolong tea. My personal favorite is jasmine green tea.
5. **Bonus:** If it's in your budget, book an infrared sauna session this week. This is a great way to wind down and sweat it out, and they're thought to support the detoxification process, weight loss, a healthy metabolism, and more.

# WEEK 4

You're almost there! By now you should be starting to feel some of the clouds lifting off your head and you may feel stronger, happier, and more energetic. Keep it up—you're doing great!

1. **Plan ahead:** This is a great time to think about what you're going to do at the end of week four. You can continue with the current plan for a longer period of time or adopt something that is more flexible and designed for you as an individual based on your gut microbiome, genetics, sensitivities, environment, and lifestyle.
2. **Experiment with herbs:** If you're in need of some help with stress reduction, look at the category of herbs called adaptogens. My personal favorite is ashwagandha and you can add it right to your morning smoothie or take it in a supplement capsule.
3. **Purge your home of toxins:** This is a good time to learn more about the beauty products, cosmetics, soaps, and lotions you use. Go to <https://www.ewg.org> to learn about what changes you could make to your routine. While toxins are on the brain, look at the water supply in your house and think about drinking filtered water, instead of tap.
4. **Take your fasting to a new level:** Consider tightening up your fasting window and eating in a narrower period of time.



## Work With An Expert

On this plan we're working to reset our gut microbiome using fasting and the keto diet—and by avoiding common problem foods. During this journey, it's also helpful to gain a better understanding of the exact composition of your gut microbiome, the specific conditions you may have, and address any longstanding immune or inflammatory issues that need to be addressed in order for you to achieve optimal gut health.

This requires a professional, which is why I recommend working with a healthcare provider that can sort through your health history, create a personalized treatment plan, and help you establish a plan for how you'll be eating in the long-term after this plan is over.

Look for a physician who has had formal training in integrative or functional medicine. They will be able to order lab testing, write prescriptions (if needed), and make personalized lifestyle and supplement recommendations.

# Healthy Digestion for Life

You made it! Rest assured that your gut is in a much better place today than it was 4 weeks ago, before you turned your lifestyle on its head. Now it's time to transition to a more sustainable way of eating and living, while continuing to show your gut plenty of love.

Remember, the diet you've been following over the past 4-weeks has been a *therapeutic diet*. So while it served the purpose of resetting your gut, it's restrictive and not something I'd expect you to maintain long-term. (Plus, there's actually not much evidence on whether maintaining a strictly low-carb diet for long periods of time will really benefit your health.)

So how do you establish a way of eating that you can maintain for the rest of your life, while still upholding your newfound gut health? Nailing down a lifestyle plan that works for you in the long-term is all about **sustainability**. You're human and want enjoy life. You want to have cake on your birthday! You want to be able to enjoy a late-night snack every now and again. I'm here to tell you that it's okay to let your guard down once in a while, as long as you maintain a healthy foundation overall. At the end of the day, you're the one who has to cook and eat the food—so it's important to pick a nutrition plan that works for your health, lifestyle, schedule, and taste buds.

The good news is that you can take the key principles of keto and fasting that you've been using over the last month and adapt them to your lifestyle. What does this look like? You might continue with your 16-hour fasting window at least a few days a week and try a fasting-mimicking diet once or twice a year. Or, if you've been indulging in carbs while on vacation, you might try cycling back on the low-carb keto diet for a few weeks. The keto diet and fasting don't have to be done 24:7 to work; in fact, they are great tools to use in the shorter term when you want to get back on track. Despite what many people will tell you, it doesn't have to be all or nothing.

Moving forward, the more individualized your nutrition plan, the better. There is no universal diet that I'd recommend every single person should follow long-term, which is why establishing a personalized protocol based on your gut microbiome, nutritional genetics, epigenetics, sensitivities, exposures, and other medical conditions is so important. This type of plan is sustainable because it's specific and tailored to your unique needs. You're only eliminating or limiting foods that are a problem for YOU, not ones we *suspect might be a problem* from a population standpoint. When it comes to nutrition, the more personalized the better. I recommend working with an integrative gastroenterologist who is able to create a highly individualized plan and guide you through it every step of the way. As a physician, this is what I love doing the most! As a general rule, continue pairing healthy fats with plenty of colorful vegetables and fruits, eat a moderate amount of protein, and keep your diet clean, organic, and whole-foods based. Eat what makes you feel good, and don't get lost in what's trendy or new if it's not working for you.



## Meet Dr. Marvin Singh, M.D.



Dr. Marvin Singh is America's premier wellness concierge. He practices as an integrative gastroenterologist in San Diego, California, is a diplomate of the American Board of Integrative Medicine, board certified internist and gastroenterologist. Dr. Singh was trained by Dr. Andrew Weil, a pioneer in the field of integrative medicine, at the University of Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine. Dr. Singh is currently a voluntary assistant clinical professor at UCSD in the Department of Family Medicine and Public Health; prior to this, he has been a clinical assistant professor at UCLA and an assistant professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins University.

Dr. Singh is a member of the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine, American College of Lifestyle Medicine, and the True Health Initiative, among many other societies. He is actively involved in the American Gastroenterological Association and American Medical Association. He is co-editing the textbook of Integrative Gastroenterology 2nd edition and has already written several book chapters and articles.

He is dedicated to guiding his patients toward optimal wellness every step of the way, in whatever manner they need. He uses cutting-edge tests and personally designed protocols to develop truly individualized plans based on genetics, microbiome, metabolism, and lifestyle. A graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, Dr. Singh completed his residency training in internal medicine at the University of Michigan Health System followed by fellowship training in Gastroenterology at Scripps Clinic/Green Hospital.

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