

Name: _____

Date: _____

My root causes are: _____

STEP 1a: Master the Foundations (Everyone MUST start here)

I can't stress enough how important this section is. We can take all of the best supplements, but unless we have established a solid foundation that allows the body to feel safe they will be a waste of time and money.

Blood Sugar Balance

1. Balanced Meals:

- a. Meals and snacks should fit into the balanced equations at least **80-90% of the time**. Remember, we're not aiming for perfection, but we do need consistency in order to make progress and see lasting results.

- i. **Balanced Meal = Carb/fiber + a little fat + protein + color + fun**
- ii. **Balanced Snack = Carb + fiber/fat/protein** (*I recommend always having protein with your snack*)

b. Protein Goals:

- i. **Per meal: 20-25g** (sometimes more if you're particularly active)
- ii. **Per snack: 8-10g**

c. TIPS:

- i. Find 1-3 basic meal formulas that work for you and change up each of the components from week-to-week to add variety. You don't have to reinvent the wheel every night.
 1. Example formula for dinner: grain, meat, veggie
 - a. Week 1 variation: wild rice, rotisserie chicken, roasted broccoli
 - b. Week 2 variation: quinoa, oven roasted chicken with sheet pan root vegetables (i.e. carrots, sweet potatoes, and parsnips)
 - c. Week 3: pasta, rotisserie chicken, kale salad
- ii. Utilize sauces to help add flavor variety.
 1. This blog, [Pinch of Yum](#), has great sauce recipes that are super simple and add flavor and dimension to your basic meal formula.
 2. Or buy higher quality premade ones, like from [Primal Kitchen](#).

d. RESOURCES/TOOLS:

- i. Balanced Meal Handout from Module 3
- ii. Protein powder and bar recommendations on the Product/Resource Recommendation list
 1. We don't want to rely on these to meet all of our protein needs, but they can be helpful tools.

2. Meal timing: Aim to eat something with protein within 30-60 min of waking up and every 3-4 hours throughout the day.

i. Example:

Wake up: 6-6:30 AM

Breakfast OR wake up snack w/ protein: 6:30-7:00 AM (depending on wake up time)

Snack w/ protein (or larger breakfast): 9:00-10:00 AM

Lunch: 12:30-1:30 PM

Snack w/ protein: 4-4:30 PM

Dinner: 7:30-8:30PM

b. Take time to understand your hunger cues because it's not always a grumbling or growling stomach. Examples of other types of hunger cues include:

- i. Headaches
- ii. Fatigue
- iii. Brain fog
- iv. Difficulty concentrating
- v. Nausea or other stomach pain
- vi. Reflux/heartburn
- vii. Increased ADHD-like symptoms
- viii. Cravings (especially for sweets)

c. Signs that your blood sugar is out of balance throughout the day:

- i. Drop in energy/fatigue in the early afternoon
- ii. Constantly craving something sweet in the afternoon/evening
- iii. Feeling out of control around food or like you have a "food addiction" in the evening
- iv. Waking up nauseous for no apparent reason
- v. Poor sleep quality

d. **TIPS:**

- i. Set alarms every 3-4 hours throughout the day to remind yourself to eat something - it's OK to eat more mechanically in the beginning as your body readjusts to these new eating patterns.
- ii. If you're not feeling well or your appetite is decreased for a period of time, focus on still getting balance but in smaller portions. This may require eating smaller, more frequent meals than normal. Make sure to still prioritize protein, while also allowing yourself to reach for foods that provide comfort.
- iii. If you're not used to eating breakfast or your appetite is low first thing in the morning, start with a wake up snack with protein.
- iv. No coffee on an empty stomach.

3. Hydration

- a. **Goal = at least ½ your body weight in ounces per day** (ex. If you weigh 150 pounds, your hydration goal is at least 75 oz/day)
- b. If you struggle with constipation, your needs go up to at least **80-100 oz/day**

- c. Focus on getting fluids throughout the day and in between meals.
- 4. Meal Hygiene:
 - a. **HOW you eat is just as important as WHAT you eat** (remember the Cephalic Phase of digestion). You want to do everything you can to set your body up for digestive success.
 - i. Take 20 minutes to eat and chew your food to an applesauce consistency.
 - ii. Limit liquids with meals (especially if stomach acid is low because it lowers stomach acid even more).
 - iii. Limit distractions as much as possible (i.e. don't eat while working/driving/scrolling/reading/watching TV/etc.).
 - iv. Take deep breaths or do 4-5 rounds of box breathing before starting to eat.
 - v. How can you enhance your mealtime experience so it's calming (music, candles, company)?
- 5. Diet/Plant Diversity
 - a. Our gut bugs are picky eaters, so if we're eating the same foods over and over, only some of them will be getting the foods they love, which means only some of them will be able to thrive. Having a diet that is diverse (especially in plant foods) is directly related to how diverse our gut microbiota is, which is directly related to how well it functions.
 - b. Fiber Goals:
 - i. **Total: 25-30g/day** (more isn't always better)
 - ii. **Per Meal: 8-10g**
 - iii. **Per Snack: 2-4g**
 - c. **TIPS:**
 - i. Aim for 30 different plant foods per week:
 - 1. Veggies (fresh or frozen): green beans, peas, corn, potatoes, sweet potatoes, summer squash, winter squash (butternut, acorn, pumpkin, etc.), asparagus, artichokes, carrots, etc.
 - 2. Fruit: fresh, frozen or dried (no sugar added)
 - 3. Beans/legumes: pinto beans, black beans, chickpeas, black eyed peas, lentils, split peas
 - 4. Grains: wheat, barley, rye (plus the ones listed below)
 - a. GF Grains: buckwheat, millet, teff, oats, rice, quinoa, popcorn, sorghum, cornmeal
 - 5. Herbs & Spices: ginger, turmeric, rosemary, oregano, basil, thyme, cinnamon, etc.
 - ii. Add variety by cycling through different plant options with your basic meal/snack formula.
 - d. **RESOURCES/TOOLS:**
 - i. Fiber Reintroduction Guide from Module 3
 - ii. Recipe blog recommendations:
 - 1. [Pinch of Yum](#)
 - 2. [Budget Bytes](#)
 - 3. [Plays Well With Butter](#)
 - 4. [Cookie & Kate](#) - all vegetarian
 - 5. [Smitten Kitchen](#)
 - iii. [The Healthy Happy Gut Cookbook](#)

Address Low Stomach Acid

If you have low stomach acid (i.e. it took at least 3 min to burp with the Baking Soda Test): ½ tsp bitters ~15 min before meals

- See Product/Resource Recommendations for digestive bitters recommendations.
- Incorporate bitter foods into your diet:
 - Examples: arugula, mustard greens, radishes, artichokes, dandelion greens, coffee (be careful of caffeine intake), Brussels sprouts
- Focus on getting fluids/water between meals
 - We don't want to dilute what stomach acid we have, making it even less acidic.
 - You don't have to avoid it all together, but try to stop drinking large amounts ~20 min before/after eating.
- Intentionally work on stress management - starting with proper Meal Hygiene

Add reflux support (see Product/Resource Recommendations list), if needed.

STEP 1b: Regulate Your Bowels

If your bowels haven't been regulated with Step 1a interventions, add in one of the following protocols based on your symptoms.

Constipation Protocol:

Start at the top and work your way down:

1. Magnesium citrate:
 - Start at 300 mg (2 capsules) ~30-60 minutes before bed. Do this for 2 nights. If you don't have a satisfying, easy to pass bowel movement the next day, then increase your dose to 450 mg (3 capsules) ~30-60 minutes before bed
 - Do this for another 2 nights. If you don't have a satisfying, easy to pass bowel movement the next day increase magnesium dose to 600 mg (4 capsules) daily (can split so that you take 2 capsules in the morning, and 2 capsules in the evening).
 - If you STILL are not having an easy to pass, satisfying bowel movement, your sodium and/or potassium are likely out of balance (minerals work together). Consider adding an electrolyte supplement to your water daily (see product/resource recommendations for options).
2. Drink enough water-- approx 100oz per day
 - Step 1. Make sure you are drinking AT least ½ your body weight in ounces, or minimum 64 ounces, each day (whichever is higher) consistently.

- Step 2: Once you have achieved that, gradually increase your water intake to 100 ounces daily of room temperature and/or warm liquids
- Note: If you are not eating very many processed foods and are cooking most of your meals from scratch, you may want to add ¼ tsp unrefined salt (like Redmond's Real Salt or Himalayan pink salt) or an electrolyte supplement (see Product/Resource Recommendations).
- 3. Avoid Known Triggers for Constipation (this is very individual but test your personal tolerance)
 - Look at:
 - Excess raw veggies and fruits (try very well cooked and soft veggies and fruits to improve digestion)
 - Dairy (especially cheese) - you could also try switching to lactose free dairy
 - Alcohol
- 4. Pelvic floor stretching and Abdominal massage
 - Try the "[I love you massage](#)" morning and night
 - [Moo breathing](#) on the toilet
 - Use a [squatty potty](#)
 - Positioning for easier elimination!!

After you have mastered the initial (4) steps to address constipation, consider these steps:

- 5. Your gut LOVES a morning routine:
 - Example:
 - 8oz water with ½ tsp salt
 - 5-10 minutes on the toilet (even if it doesn't feel like you have to go)
 - Eat breakfast with protein within 60 min of waking up
 - Some movement if possible (like a 5-10 min walk outside or a short yoga session)
- 6. Motility Support:
 - Vagus nerve stimulation:
 - Start gargling (pretty aggressively) by timing how long you can gargle day 1
 - If you gargle for 25 seconds, this is the time you'll begin with. Do 25 seconds twice daily for 1 week. Then, re-time yourself the following week
 - If you now can tolerate 35 seconds of gargling, this is your new gargle time and you will gargle 35 seconds twice daily for the next week. Slowly build up tolerance until you can gargle for ~2-3 minutes (you can take breaks to breathe)
 - Consider humming throughout the day

- End showers with cold water (30-60 seconds)
 - Don't forget proper meal spacing (eating every 3-4 hours). This allows the migrating motor complex - MMC (the involuntary contraction and release of your gut muscles that pushes food and waste through the digestive tract) - to complete a full cycle before restarting.
7. Ginger is a great natural motility agent.
- Drink ginger tea between meals - I like this [brand](#)
 - You can also take [ginger capsules](#) at night - 1000-2000 mg nightly (or split between AM and PM)
 - **NOTE:** This is a ginger based supplement, so it can cause burning in the esophagus as it breaks down. To avoid this drink a full glass of water, avoid warm/hot beverages after taking them, and wait at least 30 min before laying down.
8. Add in prebiotic fiber SLOWLY
- SunFiber (found in Regular Girl brand or Tomorrow's Nutrition).
 - Start with ¼ scoop week 1, increase to ½ scoop week 2 and increase to 1 scoop week 3.
9. If you're STILL not having at least one complete and satisfying BM per day (consistently), consider getting additional support with testing (see Step 4).

Diarrhea/Loose Stools:

First: Include 15 minutes a day of stress management

Stress Management:

- Stress hormones can cause disruption in the muscular contractions of the gut. Remember the vagus nerve and the gut-brain axis - when our mind is anxious, our gut is anxious. When we are anxious we enter "fight or flight", which means blood is being routed away from the gut and towards the organs/limbs that will help us "run away from the tiger that's chasing us." For some, this can lead to diarrhea and loose stools. Supporting the vagus nerve and nervous system overall by incorporating stress management strategies will aid in resolving diarrhea:
 - Deep diaphragmatic breathing like the 4-7-8 relaxation breath or box breathing x4
 - Meditation (Try using a guided app such as CALM or HEADSPACE)
 - Neuroplasticity Journaling
 - Gratitude Journaling
 - Yoga
 - **See Step 2 for additional ideas**

Second: Eliminate any foods/food additives that may trigger a diarrhea episode:

Foods that can trigger a diarrhea episode in certain individuals (start at the top of this list and move down if you do not see relief):

- Alcohol
- Caffeine (found in coffee, white, black and green tea and large amounts of chocolate)
- Sugar alcohols like sorbitol, erythritol, mannitol, etc.(anything that ends in -ol...check labels)
- Artificial sweeteners like aspartame, sucralose, and saccharin, etc. (check labels)
- Greasy or fried foods (like fried chicken, french fries, etc)
- Dairy (can eliminate for 4 weeks and add back in to assess tolerance; could also try lactose free dairy first and see if there is a difference)
- Gluten (can eliminate for 4 weeks and add back in to assess tolerance; could also try sourdough and sprouted first to see if there is a difference)

Third: Add in foods that bind the stool

Foods that may help bind the stool:

- Bananas
- Broccoli → low and slow (see **Fiber Reintroduction Guide** for support)
- Brussels Sprouts → low and slow (see **Fiber Reintroduction Guide** for support)
- Apples
- Beans like chickpeas - can trial sprouted or canned (see **Fiber Reintroduction Guide** for support)
- Eggplant
- Okra
- Oranges
- Passion fruit
- Sunflower seeds
- Mashed turnips
- Cooked carrots
- Ground flax seeds
- Lentils - can trial sprouted (see **Fiber Reintroduction Guide** for support)
- Oats - can trial gluten-free/sprouted if adding back (see **Fiber Reintroduction Guide** for support)
- Oat bran

- Sweet potatoes
- Mangos
- Plums
- Berries
- Peaches
- Kiwi
- Figs

Fourth: Add in a fiber powder to bulk the stool

Fiber powders that may be helpful:

- SunFiber (found in [Regular Girl](#) brand or [Tomorrow's Nutrition](#)). Start with ¼ scoop week 1, increase to ½ scoop week 2 and increase to 1 scoop week 3.

OR

- [Psyllium](#) (start with 1 tsp twice a day, gradually increase your dose by 1 tsp each time of the day every 3-5 days until you reach the full dose of 2T twice per day)

Fifth: Stay hydrated

Make sure to replete more than just the water lost

When you are having frequent loose, watery stools, you are also losing vital minerals such as sodium, potassium, and magnesium. See Product/Resource Recommendations for great electrolyte supplement options.

Sixth: Try Supplementation

Supplement(s)/teas to try:

- [Passionflower](#) (40-60 drops in water up to 3 times per day): This is an herb that has some anti-spasmodic qualities. It can help settle down your gut and calm it.
- [Ginger](#): ginger tea may help reduce cramping and abdominal pain
- [Marshmallow Root](#): Malva tea (marshmallow root tea) can help calm the stomach and soothe intestinal "problems"

FAQ: Is it normal to have a change in bowel consistency around the time of my menstrual cycle?

Yes - Prostaglandins increase at the start of a woman's period, so it's common to see an increase in diarrhea at this time.

Alternating

Alternating between constipation and diarrhea is frequently caused by severe constipation, which leads to what's called "overflow diarrhea".

Start with Step 2 in the Constipation Protocol.