

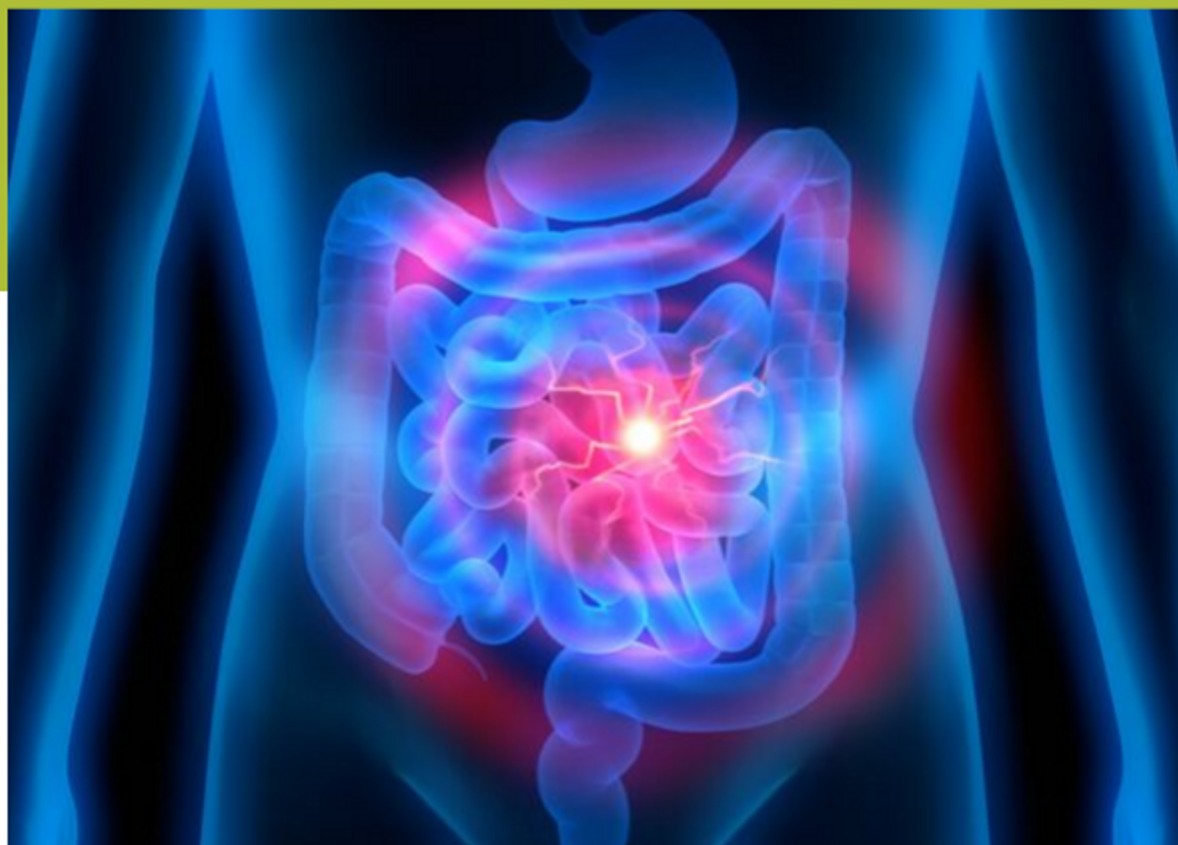
Virginia Richardson

DIGESTIVE HEALTH SPECIALIST

Digestive Rescue: IBD

THE SECRET TO OPTIMAL HEALTH IS
THROUGH THE GUT

*"A helpful guide for people suffering from Inflammatory
Bowel Disease (IBD) symptoms."
--Virginia*





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Gut Health & Happiness

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STEP 1



DIGESTIVE DISTRESS

Do you have issues with your digestion that are ruling your life?

Do you suffer from symptoms such as bloating, cramping, constipation or stomach pains? Do you find yourself rushing to the loo unable to control your bowel movements?

You are not alone.

These symptoms and others can be very common, which I understand and have been through with my family before. My husband has suffered with Ulcerative Colitis since he was a child, taking dozens of pills everyday all the way through into adulthood. Recently his Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) symptoms started getting worse and conventional doctors recommended increasing the strength of his medication with no alternative paths to follow. Constant high strength medication was not a route we wanted to explore so after a lot of research I decided to increase my knowledge, study and become qualified with the world-renowned Institute of Optimum Nutrition. It was there that I discovered how powerful prescribed nutrition, lifestyle changes and tailored supplementation can be.

What some people don't know is that a compromised digestive system can affect our entire bodies, with symptoms that appear unrelated. This could mean chronic fatigue, skin conditions, autoimmune conditions, mood disorders, allergies or intolerances, arthritis and even autism. My husband's continuous symptoms included stomach pains, cramping, joint aches and tiredness, to name a few and they greatly impacted the quality of our family life.

Do you find yourself juggling everything and trying to find a work, life balance but not have the time to spend on figuring out how to help your digestive issues? Let me help. We will create personalised steps to take back your life so that you can easily go out with friends and family without worrying about what to eat or whether there is a toilet nearby.

Often the contributing factors to your symptoms, such as stomach pains or bloating will be linked with lifestyle, high stress levels or perhaps the food you've eaten such as bread or pasta. Working together we can find a way forward. We will work to try to identify your root causes, look for food intolerances, use specific functional tests to determine current bacteria levels, nutrient deficiencies, digestive function as well as introduce the right probiotics and prebiotics into your diet that will help your condition.

By using the knowledge I have gained over 3 years of studying, as well as using recent evidence based research, my husband and I were able to implement bespoke changes through a personalised programme. From this he was able to come off all drugs and move his IBD into remission. This could be you too.

It is now a case of maintenance which easily fits into an active, busy and full family life. My goal is to help others in similar situations: to educate how personalised nutrition using a functional medicine approach can make a massive positive impact and lead you towards optimal gut health and happiness.



Focus Area 1

NUTRITION

So when it comes to optimal gut health, it's important to focus on the foods that provide your body with the right levels of nutrients as well as look at those that might be causing you harm, especially when it comes to symptoms that may relate to IBD.

Whilst diet is not the cause of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), there are certain foods that may trigger a flare-up or make symptoms worse, such as increased diarrhoea. Those triggers can vary widely from person to person and no one type of food or beverage aggravates symptoms for all people with ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease. Equally there will be foods that can help repair your gut and keep it healthy and working as well as possible.

Your digestive system is designed to break down and absorb all the food you eat. Nutrients from your food break down and are delivered to your body's cells in order to help your systems, such as your immune system or central nervous system. These nutrients will then help to make your systems work optimally.

The intestines are part of your digestive system, and this is where most of your digestion and nutrient absorption occurs. If your body is not able to break down the food you eat, because of inflammation within your intestinal lining, it's not going to get the nutrients that it requires.

This means you may lack energy, crave certain foods, and start to become more susceptible to infections and illnesses because of a compromised immune system. If your intake of food consists mainly of processed foods, which are often full of sugar, additives, preservatives, synthetic fats as well as genetically modified ingredients, this will have a negative effect on your digestive system as well as potentially cause inflammation of your gut lining.

"It is important to realise that the food you eat may either prevent or trigger inflammation within your body. Continuous inflammation can then lead to an array of problems including heart disease, stroke and diabetes."

Diets are often found to be low in fibre as well, especially a diet that contains processed foods or is low in vegetables and fruits. That combined with a low consumption of water will affect the efficiency of your bowel movements and you may become constipated. In addition, eating processed foods (junk food) may cause your digestive system to slow down, resulting in uncomfortable bloating.

These types of foods are refined in such a way that they lose most of their key nutrients, which can potentially contribute to nutrient deficiencies. Nutrients such as vitamins and minerals are essential in order for our bodies and our systems to work effectively. For example in order for our bodies to create energy, we need B vitamins.

We can get B Vitamins from specific foods but they are also are manufactured in your gut, so if your gut is not working well you may be at risk of deficiency. B vitamins provide energy and support stress hormones but each B vitamin has a specific role, for example vitamin B5 is important for stress management whereas vitamin B6 is crucial for happy periods. In addition, vitamin B12 is often missing in vegan and vegetarian diets but often deficient in those with IBD.

I can offer a fantastic test in clinic (a urine test) which measures nutrient deficiencies, particularly B vitamins, allowing us to hone in on where your diet needs to change the most or perhaps where supplementation would benefit you the most.

In addition simple blood and stool tests can also be used to determine food intolerances or allergies or help us to identify if you are not absorbing the nutrients needed but are taking in through your diet.

As part of our time together I can guide you through these functional tests, finding the ones most appropriate for you and your current symptoms. These tests can then either be done at home or through your GP with the results sent back directly to you.



By analysing your current diet and using the results from your functional tests, I can get a good idea of your current nutrient status. There is no 'magic' diet that works for everyone with IBD but I can help you identify foods that cause you flare-ups. We can then include foods that will help calm inflammation and heal the gut lining, this should then help you to manage your IBD, reduce flare-ups and their effects and ultimately work towards remission.

This information will be a good starting point but we also need to take into consideration your lifestyle as well as your hormone and bacterial profile. This will then give us a bigger picture and help me to understand and identify the mediators and triggers for your symptoms.

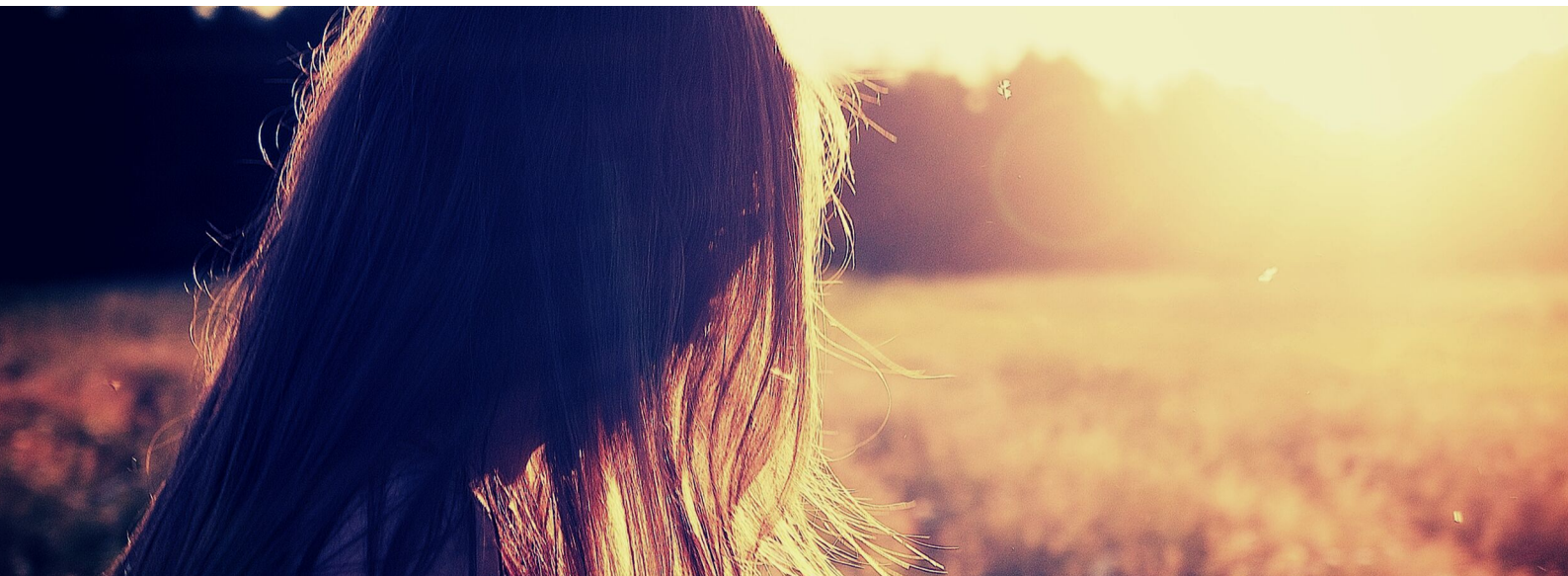
The takeaway message from this is that we are what we eat – you can either create an environment that will optimise your gut health or one that will increase inflammation and exacerbate your symptoms.

Processed, refined and high sugar foods are inflammatory and will also feed harmful bacteria. You need to choose foods that will improve gut health, heal any potential damage to the gut and ultimately reduce flare-ups.

Establishing balanced gut friendly nutrition is key - the easiest way to find out what works for you is to start by analysing your current dietary habits, discover potential nutrient deficiencies and malabsorption issues. With the use of functional tests we can decide what would personally benefit your digestive system.

I can create a personalised plan that is unique to your body and lifestyle.

By looking at your nutritional profile as well as your hormonal and gut bacterial balance I can design a programme that is right for you, with the overall aim to create a healthy happy gut.



Focus Area 2

BACTERIA

If you are eating food that is low in nutrients and high in refined sugars, such as processed foods, this can then feed and encourage the growth of harmful bacteria inside your gut.

If you are eating lots of processed foods or foods that are low in nutrients and fibre, you may not be eating enough of the foods that help the beneficial bacteria inside your gut to grow.

"WE NEED THE BENEFICIAL BACTERIA TO PROLIFERATE IN ORDER FOR THEM TO PROVIDE ALL THE HEALTHFUL BENEFITS TO US THAT THEY CAN, SUCH AS CREATING B VITAMINS FOR OUR ENERGY SYSTEMS OR CREATING SHORT CHAIN FATTY ACIDS, WHICH ARE IMPORTANT FOR COLON HEALTH."

Bacteria lives throughout our body, but it is said that the ones in our gut have the biggest impact on our health. If your microbiome becomes unbalanced, then the harmful microbiome can take over and cause many problems.

As Hippocrates once said, "All disease begins in the gut." Several disease processes can be turned on if the microbiome becomes imbalanced and often the resulting symptoms will seem to have nothing to do with the health of our gut.





Research has shown there are links between our gut bacteria and health conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease, obesity, diabetes, mental health disorders, autoimmune conditions, constipation, diarrhoea and skin conditions to name a few.

The number and types of bacteria that we have in our bodies can be thought of like a fingerprint. Unique to the individual. It is estimated that the number of bacterial cells within the human body can range between 30 to 50 trillion in each individual and that we can have between 500 and 1000 different types of bacteria in each of us, some beneficial to us and some not but they can control our brain function, our digestion, our mood, our immune system, hormone balance and our metabolism etc.

Bacteria may also influence your behaviour via the 100 million neurons in your gut. This is the reason your gut is also known as your second brain.

"The food we eat plays a large part in the health of your gut. It can either support the growth of your beneficial bacteria or it can cause harmful gut bacteria to proliferate. The health of your gut can then determine how you extract the nutrients from the food you eat and even how you store body fat."

Researchers speculate that any disruption to the normal, healthy balance of bacteria in the gut can cause the immune system to overreact and contribute to inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract, in turn leading to the development of symptoms of disease that occur not only throughout your body, but also your brain.

The gut-brain connection is no joke; it can link anxiety to stomach problems and vice versa. Have you ever had a "gut-wrenching" experience? Do certain situations make you "feel nauseous"? Have you ever felt "butterflies" in your stomach? We use these expressions for a reason. The gastrointestinal tract is sensitive to emotion. Anger, anxiety, sadness, elation — all of these feelings (and others) can trigger symptoms in the gut.

The brain has a direct effect on the stomach and intestines. For example, the very thought of eating can release the stomach's juices before food gets there. This connection goes both ways. A troubled intestine can send signals to the brain, just as a troubled brain can send signals to the gut. Therefore, a person's stomach or intestinal distress can be the cause or the product of anxiety, stress, or depression. That's because the brain and the gastrointestinal (GI) system are intimately connected.

It is difficult to try to heal a distressed gut without considering the role of stress and emotion. Psychosocial factors influence the actual physiology of the gut, as well as symptoms. In other words, stress (or depression or other psychological factors) can affect movement and contractions of your gut, make inflammation worse, or perhaps make you more susceptible to infection.

How can you harm your gut bacteria? By using antibiotics, over the counter products/medications (mouthwash, antacids, painkillers). Changes in public hygiene – cleaners, handwash, antibacterial everything. Exposure to pollutants – pesticides, herbicides etc. Sterilized foods eg. milk, artificial food colouring. Increased consumption of carbohydrates – particularly refined. Bacteria feed on sugar, particularly pathogenic bacteria that have gained the upper hand.



Stress, poor diet choices, radiation treatment, and chemotherapy all affect the health of our bacteria.

How can we help the good bacteria flourish? The first step is to eat a well-balanced diet. Foods rich in fibre such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains, as well as those that have a prebiotic or probiotic effect (like kefir or yogurt) are good for gut health. Probiotics or prebiotics support microbial health by helping to restore balance to the gut. These are foods that contain live beneficial (probiotic) bacteria and, in the case of prebiotics, contain substances like specific types of fiber that nurture the growth of probiotic bacteria.

Beneficial bacteria may also protect against the upset stress causes to sleep. Recent research shows that one strain of beneficial bacteria may help blunt the effects of stress on sleep. Scientists in Japan studied the impact of a daily serving of a probiotic on a group of students who were preparing to take an exam. Scientists divided the students into two groups. For eight weeks leading up to the exam, and three weeks after, one group drank a placebo beverage every day, while the other group drank a probiotic beverage containing the bacteria *Lactobacillus casei* strain Shirota (sometimes referred to as *L. casei* strain Shirota). The *Lactobacillus* type is one of the beneficial bacteria found naturally in the human microbiome. It's also found in fermented foods like yogurt, and sold in supplement form. Not surprisingly, both the placebo and probiotic groups experienced increasing stress as exam day approached. The placebo group also saw changes to their sleep. They started taking longer to fall asleep and spent less time in deep, slow-wave sleep, as their anxiety grew and test day grew closer.



The group taking the probiotic had a different experience. Their stress levels rose as the exam drew near, just as the placebo group did. But the probiotic group didn't suffer the same negative changes to sleep. On the contrary, the probiotic group experienced less difficulty falling asleep under pre-exam stress, they maintained, and even strengthened, their deep, slow-wave sleep and woke feeling more rested and refreshed than the placebo group.

So how can we identify what bacteria we have in our guts and the levels that are present? I use a fantastic and very comprehensive stool test in clinic. It is the fastest and easiest way to get all of this information and more. The functional stool test is sent directly to you, for you to do at home. You then send the completed test directly to the laboratory who send me your results so that I can analyse them for you. We then go through the results together so that we will know what to tackle first.

By working together, we can analyse the food you are eating, test for nutritional

deficiencies as well as the current types and levels of your own gut bacteria and whether or not they are affecting other areas of your body such as hormonal balance. I will then create a personalised plan to help get your gut bacteria back into balance and then support the growth of your beneficial bacteria.

The number and diversity of our gut bacteria can impact many areas of our health including digestive health, hormonal balance, mental health, body weight and whether our immune system is working efficiently. It is all about balance.

Working together we can use functional tests such as a comprehensive stool test to discover the current health and balance of your gut bacteria as well as other areas of your body.

Once this information is known we can tailor a programme to have a positive effect on the beneficial bacteria in your gut to help them grow, be healthy and happy.





Focus Area 3

HORMONES

We have discussed the importance of ensuring the food you eat is balanced and nutritious in order to support your body and allow it to function optimally. It is also important to understand the balance of your hormones.

Both men and women have and need hormones such as progesterone, testosterone and oestrogen, but it is not difficult for them to become imbalanced through our lifestyle choices, our nutrition or the medications we take for example.

Excess hormones of any type in your body such as cortisol, will disrupt the way your body works, including the digestive system. It is also possible that if the ratios between hormones such as progesterone and oestrogen is off, your bowels will be sluggish and could in turn cause bloating, cramping and diarrhoea.

There are many reasons for your hormones to become imbalanced, such as having an under or overactive thyroid, being overweight, taking birth control medications or increased toxic exposure as well as simply having inadequate sleep, a poor diet or being exposed to chronic stress. All these things can imbalance your hormones which can have a negative impact on your gut health.

We've discussed briefly some of the consequences of being exposed to continuous stress. It may also lead to overexposure of cortisol and other stress hormones which may then cause symptoms including constipation and diarrhoea as well as depression, weight gain and sleep issues.

Hormonal imbalances is something that we will look at together as part of your programme. I use simple functional blood or urine tests that will help to identify the levels of hormones within your body. The results from these tests will be considered when creating a personalised nutrition and / or supplement plan which we will use to help re-balance your hormones.

Natural supplements such as black cohosh, red clover and evening primrose oil have been used for a long time to help combat hormonal imbalance symptoms, but lifestyle changes are also very important to look at.

It is a complicated relationship between our hormones and digestive system but by incorporating simple lifestyle changes we can work towards reducing hormonal imbalances. These changes can include a suitable exercise programme, stress management techniques and reduced toxic exposure. In addition your nutrition plan can include specific foods to help balance hormones or support your stress response which over time (recommended 12 weeks) we can start to bring the body back into a more balanced state.

Hormone imbalances impact on your digestive health. Your hormones can become imbalanced through many ways including specific health conditions such as thyroid dysfunction, medications, nutrient deficiencies, stress and lack of sleep.

Working out which hormones are imbalanced and the specific triggers for your hormone imbalance is key in order to try to rebalance and help other systems recover such as your digestive system.

Through the use of simple functional tests such as blood and urine we can discover if any of your hormones are imbalanced.

Once this is known we can start to re-balance through the use of specific foods, supplements and easy to incorporate lifestyle changes.

Your easy to follow plan will be broken down into stages to help guide you along the way so that it can fit easily into your life making positive changes to your health long term.



Gut Health & Happiness

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STEP 2



ROOT CAUSES

"As discussed previously, our microbiome is just like our fingerprints, we all have different fingerprints and we all have a different microbiome."

Understanding your symptoms, their main causes and how we can help reduce them is important but what will really make an impact is identifying the contributors, the triggers and the root cause of your symptoms and if possible of your inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

The exact cause of the IBD called ulcerative colitis is unknown but emerging evidence shows that gut bacteria play a primary role in the development of the disease. Some researchers believe that imbalances in our intestinal flora (gut bacteria) may be at the root of IBD.

Immune cells in the walls of the intestinal tract are engaged in continual "cross talk" with the trillions of bacteria that inhabit our gut. When beneficial bacteria are suppressed and harmful bacteria proliferate, the intestinal defense system may go into "overdrive," resulting in an over exuberant immune response, triggering autoimmunity and consequent inflammation.



However, unlike our fingerprints, our microbiome can be influenced and changed by a wide variety of factors. These will include things such as how you were born and fed as a baby, what medications you've taken, the type of lifestyle you lead, the level of stress in your life and the food you eat.

Looking at the main contributors such as poor nutrition, that can imbalance gut bacteria and therefore theoretically cause IBD, is key to being able to restore the health of your gut and ultimately have a positive impact on your IBD remission as well as other areas of your health.



Focus Area 1

POOR NUTRITION

Ensuring that we eat the right foods in the right amounts specific to your individual needs is essential for a healthy long life. What your body requires, changes as we get older, for example, we need different nutrients in different quantities such as more vitamin D and calcium.

The role of your diet on both the development and the treatment of your IBD cannot be underestimated. Major changes in the Western Diet have accompanied rises in the incidence of IBD over the past 75 years. Changes to your diet in both the short and the long term can have an influence on microbial profiles such as our gut bacteria. Dietary changes will also affect the health of the bacteria within your gut.

The introduction of refined sugar and chemical-laden foods have probably fueled the rise of IBD. Diets that are high in highly-refined carbohydrates or sugars can cause the good and bad bacteria in the gut to become unbalanced. In fact, if you eat large quantities of these highly-processed foods there is potential to then develop leaky gut syndrome, a condition in which the tight junctions in the large intestine open up and allow bacteria and their toxins to get through. This, in turn, can elicit an auto-immune inflammatory response.

By reducing your intake of simple sugars, such as those found in honey, desserts, cakes and concentrated fruit juices plus artificial sweeteners, you will help your beneficial gut bacteria but you may also reduce the chance of diarrhoea. Simple sugars and sweeteners are known to increase the chance or even cause diarrhoea, a well known symptom of IBD.

Ubiquitous trans-fats and refined omega-6 vegetable oils are thought to promote inflammation and greasy fried foods are also known to increase gas, bloating and diarrhoea.



IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT THAT YOU TRY TO MAKE YOUR DIET AS COLOURFUL AS POSSIBLE. THE DIFFERENT COLOURS CONTAIN DIFFERENT MICRONUTRIENTS AND PARTICULARLY PHYTOCHEMICALS WHICH BENEFIT YOUR GUT BACTERIA AS WELL AS THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR GUT.

At the same time most of us also have inadequate intake of anti-inflammatory omega-3s which help to heal the gut. A diet that is low in fruit and vegetables will also be low in fibre. Fibre feeds our beneficial gut bacteria and helps them to grow as well as helping the passage of our food through the intestines which is useful if you are suffering from constipation.

If you have IBD and are suffering from diarrhoea then you may need to restrict foods high in fibre, such as fresh fruits and vegetables and wholegrains, as these can aggravate symptoms (especially when the intestines are inflamed).

However, fibre is a very important part of our diet as it can also be a prebiotic which feeds your beneficial bacteria. Therefore you can try cooking high fibre foods before eating: rather than eliminating these necessary foods from your diet, thoroughly cook fruits and vegetables, and avoid eating them raw.

During a flare-up it may be necessary to avoid things like oats and corn as well as legumes, vegetables and fruit with high fibre content (in particular cabbage, sprouts, citrus fruit, plums, grapes and apricots). Fruit and vegetables you are eating will need to be peeled, cleared of seeds and then cooked e.g. stewed apples are suitable and a great healer of the gut due to the pectin content. It is also important that you try to make your diet as colourful as possible. The different colours contain different micronutrients and particularly phytochemicals which benefit your gut bacteria as well as the structure of your gut.

Consuming a diet high in polyphenols has a beneficial impact on your gut bacteria. If your diet is lacking in these types of foods then the health of your gut bacteria will not be optimal. Polyphenol-rich foods are excellent to include as part of your overall gut-healing plan along with some of the other heavy-hitters like probiotics and prebiotics.

Polyphenols are naturally occurring compounds found in plants. Many of these plants make up our food supply, including fruits, vegetables, coffee, tea, and wine. Once consumed, only about 5-10% of polyphenols are directly absorbed in the small intestine, while the rest make their way to the colon to be broken down by our gut bacteria into metabolites, which then exert their important physiological effects.



Researchers are now discovering that the relationship between polyphenols and the gut microbiota is a two-way street; that is, the polyphenols positively change the composition of the gut bacteria, and the gut bacteria are responsible for metabolizing the polyphenols into their bioactive metabolites which then benefit our health.

When considering IBD a healthy diet is more about what you keep in your diet, rather than what you cut out. Initially you may need to exclude foods to find out what triggers your symptoms. However, if you exclude foods, but find no real difference in your symptoms then you can try to reintroduce them slowly back into your diet.

To determine which foods tend to provoke symptoms and flare-ups, it can be useful to keep a food diary. This can help you to see how your diet relates to your symptoms.

Within the clinic, I can help you discover which foods particularly aggravate your symptoms and advise on those foods which will be important for you to include for your gut health. Whilst looking at your current lifestyle and your own exposure to stress, I will also work with your food diary making changes that will fit easily with your life. Over time we can try various different combinations to discover what works for you and what doesn't.

A classic mistake people tend to make is thinking they can create their own food groups, but without properly understanding how food impacts their health and the health of their gut bacteria they end up aggravating their IBD symptoms.

When considering IBD, a healthy diet is more about what you keep in your diet, rather than what you cut out. Initially you may need to exclude foods to find out what triggers your symptoms. However if you exclude foods but find no real difference in your symptoms then we can try to reintroduce them slowly back into your diet.

By looking at what you are currently keeping in your diet and more importantly what you have left out, will help determine the right course of action.

Using a food diary, tracking symptoms, looking at lifestyle and stress levels as well as using functional stool, blood and urine tests will all help determine the best personalised plan for you. A plan that fits in with your life. By making small gut healthy changes specific to your IBD you can enjoy creating a healthier and happier gut environment.

Focus Area 2

STRESS

Whilst we can never underestimate the role that diet plays on both the development and the treatment of IBD, it is important to understand the impact of other areas such as stress.

Stress is an important part of our lives, and a little stress can be beneficial; it can help us boost brain power as low levels of stress can stimulate the release of chemicals called neurotrophins, which may boost productivity

and concentration. Furthermore, short term stress can help boost immunity by producing chemicals that regulate our immune system. It can also make you more resilient and motivate you to succeed. However, if that stress becomes chronic, long term stress will have numerous negative consequences, including ones that affect the health of your gut. For example, stress can change the way your food moves in your intestines as well as the secretions it produces.

Stress is known to provoke IBD and research has also shown that chronic stress can lead to an overgrowth of harmful bacteria and reduce beneficial bacteria as well.

The gut is especially vulnerable to the presence of stress and may lead to the development of a variety of gastrointestinal diseases such as gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), peptic ulcer disease, IBD, IBS, and even food allergies.

As part of your plan, addressing stress management techniques will be key. Together, along with nutritional interventions, the goal will be to heal your gut, reduce inflammation, and provide a diverse array of friendly bacteria. This can make a big difference in your gut's susceptibility to the negative effects of stress. Taking cod liver oil and probiotics on a regular basis may make a significant difference in your overall resilience to stress.

By balancing your gut bacteria this may also have positive effects on other areas within your body that have been negatively affected by stress. For example, by balancing your gut your immune system may also become stronger and improvements may be seen in skin conditions such as eczema, acne and psoriasis.

By working together we will look at your lifestyle and explore different stress management techniques that work for you. The overall objective will be to help bring everything back into balance.

“Stress can be extremely negative for our bodies.”



Stress is an important part of your life, and a little stress can be beneficial. Long term chronic stress impacts the health of your gut negatively, causing a whole cascade of problems.

Exposure to stress may lead to the development of a variety of gastrointestinal diseases including IBD and IBS.

Part of your programme with me will be to implement simple stress management techniques that work for you. We will support the stress response system nutritionally allowing you to become more resilient and helping you arrive back in a more balanced state. Once we have reduced your levels of stress and your body is naturally balanced it becomes much easier for us to create an effective plan that works faster.

Sometimes it is difficult to see what might be stressful in your life. Your personalised nutrition plan will then also include different stress management techniques that resonate with you.

Your nutritional plan will include foods that support your stress response and help your body cope better with stressful situations.

"Once you can manage stress properly, this will give your body the best chance of recovering, getting back into balance and able to use the nutrients from food to heal your gut and work more efficiently."

Focus Area 3

LIFESTYLE

Certain parts of your lifestyle may be causing you stress, but there are other areas that will impact greatly on your own personal health as well. This will include how active you are; staying active is good for you psychologically as well as physically. There is evidence to show that exercise builds up bone and helps to prevent osteoporosis, which can be a complication of IBD.

It's also important to realise that even the medications you take can interfere with your gut bacteria. As an example, antibiotics are used to get rid of harmful bacteria, but they cannot distinguish between the harmful and beneficial bacteria, so unfortunately all bacteria will generally be wiped out. Therefore, if you have been using antibiotics, it is important to ensure that at the same time you help to increase beneficial gut bacteria.

Commonly used medications can also play a role in colitis. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs-like Motrin, Aleve, ibuprofen and Celebrex) may set the stage for IBD by damaging the intestinal surface, creating a leaky gut situation and potentially causing an autoimmune reaction.





When taking medications, it is important to also support your body nutritionally so you can recover from potential negative side effects.

Whilst medications are obviously an essential, important and lifesaving part of our lives, it is important to make sure these are only taken when absolutely necessary.

For example, you could supplement with specific probiotics to help reduce side effects. The level of toxins that we are exposed to will also have an impact on our general health and especially the health of our gut. Toxins can include the chemicals from the processed foods that we eat and the alcohol we consume; it will include toxins in the air we

breathe such as those from cigarette smoke and it will also include the chemicals from the products that we put on our skin or hair and the medications / drugs that we take etc.

All this toxic load will overburden our gut (and our liver) and may lead to an imbalance of our gut bacteria, incomplete digestion, and damaged intestinal cells for example. These may then lead to a wide range of symptoms that can appear completely unrelated and will include skin conditions, mental health disorders and low energy.

When it comes to your lifestyle, it is important to understand how all of these things can affect you in different ways. This is why I work with my clients to identify their levels of exercise, the medication history and toxins that could be currently affecting them.

By looking at your nutrition, stress levels and overall lifestyle we can quickly understand what is contributing towards your gut symptoms. We can support these systems through food, supplementation as well as reducing toxic load where possible. This may then reduce IBD flare-ups, improve your gut health and move you closer to reaching and staying in remission.

The way you live greatly impacts your health.

Eating the right food, reducing your stress will be undermined if your lifestyle is not taken into consideration. The exercise you do, the medications you take and the toxins you are exposed to all play a significant role in the development or remission of IBD.

Nutrition, stress management and lifestyle considerations all need to be in sync in order to bring about good gut health with the ultimate goal of bringing your IBD into remission.

This is why I focus on creating an individual customised plan that fits into your current lifestyle and becomes easily achievable without having to make significant changes.

The road to IBD remission will require the fundamentals to all be in line. It will be about using nutrition to heal the gut, stress management and looking at your lifestyle to balance exercise, medications and toxins.

The plan will be customised to work around your current medications if necessary, incorporating suitable exercise that will easily fit into your life as well as making small changes to your toxic exposure if needed.

All these small and easy to incorporate changes will greatly benefit all areas of your health but in particular your gut health. The overall goal of your plan would be to find solutions that reduce your IBD symptoms and flare-ups and move you towards remission.



Gut Health & Happiness

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STEP 3



GUT HEALTH AND HAPPINESS



I hope that I have helped you become aware of how important it is to focus on the foods that provide your body with the right levels of nutrients, to help reduce the symptoms that may relate to your IBD.

You have learned that it is necessary to feed the beneficial bacteria in order for them to provide benefits, such as creating B vitamins for our energy systems or creating short chain fatty acids, which are important for colon health.

Hormones are also essential for both men and women such as progesterone, testosterone and oestrogen and it's not difficult for them to become imbalanced through your lifestyle choices, your nutrition or the medications you take for example.

As soon as imbalances in your nutrition, gut bacteria, hormones and lifestyle have been established, it is important to put in place a plan of action that focuses on incorporating personalised solutions for your optimal gut health and more importantly for your IBD to be moved towards remission.

Initially our main focus will be on looking at what is needed to truly nourish your gut, what nutrient deficiencies you need to address and what you need to add that will help you to repair and heal.

"We will put into place a programme that is easy to maintain, fits in with your life and ultimately helps you to manage your condition and symptoms, achieving the optimal gut health possible."

Focus Area 1

NOURISH

As you have discovered, what you eat is not just nutrition for yourself, for your muscles, or your systems, it also feeds the trillions of bacteria in your gut.

We have discussed that you have a combination of beneficial and harmful bacteria living within your guts. It is important that you keep this in balance. What you eat can quickly change the type, number and health of your gut bacteria. Therefore, understanding what foods are nourishing for your specific conditions or symptoms is essential for helping the gut to work optimally.

A healthy gut will have a diverse range of gut bacteria in it and each type of bacteria will prefer different nutrient-rich foods.

Therefore, trying to enjoy a wide range of nutritious foods is key to helping your different gut bacteria stay healthy and happy.

Everybody is different, with a unique range and number of bacteria. Some symptoms or conditions may require specific gut bacteria boosting and others may need specific harmful types reducing. Therefore, you will benefit from a personalised nutrition plan, taking into consideration the results from your tests. A nutrition plan that is specific to your unique combination of bacteria. We also want to make sure that we include a variety of plant-based foods such as fruit and vegetables, trying to aim for as many as 7 to 10 a day.



It also helps to eat more fibre rich prebiotic foods such as vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts/seeds and wholegrains to feed your healthy bacteria. When you suffer from an IBD or IBS it is important that we work closely together to make sure the fibre rich foods are suitable and supportive.

It is a good idea to enjoy probiotic foods, such as fermented vegetables (sauerkraut) and natural yoghurt as this may help increase the number and variety of healthy bacteria you already have. Other probiotic foods and beverages include kefir, cottage cheese, fresh sauerkraut, kimchi, kombucha, apple cider vinegar, and miso.

Finally, try to include polyphenol rich foods in your diet such as berries (blueberries, blackberries, strawberries etc.), broccoli, red cabbage, onions, tomatoes, tea and olive oil. Polyphenol foods are anti-inflammatory in nature helping to reduce potential inflammation in your intestines. They also help to control the balance of gut bacteria by stimulating the growth of our beneficial bacteria and inhibiting the growth of harmful bacteria.

As part of your gut healing programme we will discuss the nutrition that will work best for your current symptoms, identify nutrient deficiencies and start to repair any damage to the gut.

These are just a few ideas to help you nourish and support your gut health through nutrition. It is clear that for optimal gut health and management of your IBD you will need to eat the right foods. Foods that help to reduce inflammation as well as foods that boost the health and number of your beneficial bacteria.

Highly nutritious foods such as polyphenols, prebiotic and probiotic foods will boost beneficial bacteria whereas processed and refined foods will encourage the growth of harmful bacteria.

This is why we spend a lot of time creating a personalised, balanced, nutritious and highly varied diet that will help keep your gut healthy and happy.

We will create an IBD plan for optimising your gut health and make sure that it is made up of all the foods that you love. We will look at the right foods that can easily be fitted into your current diet and lifestyle. Foods that help with your IBD symptoms and ones that can be easily switched with what you currently eat or that you can incorporate into your favourite meals. Our goal is to help reduce your IBD symptoms as well as help with the long term management, so that you can enjoy a normal and full life.

Focus Area 2

REPAIR

Another useful technique to learn is to become more mindful of the way you eat. Eating the right foods to nourish your gut and calm IBD symptoms is important, but if you cannot digest and absorb all of these nutrients then progress will be slowed.

Even the way you chew your food and the speed at which you eat can make a significant difference. Paying attention to chewing is essential, it's how you start to break down your food and it is what our teeth were designed for. Research says we should aim to chew every mouthful 30 times, this small act of eating consciously will help us digest our food more efficiently. Slow down and enjoy the time you spend eating or drinking.

It is also useful for us to measure how effective you are at digesting your food properly. For example, we test your stomach acid levels with a simple in-clinic technique. Results from your comprehensive stool analysis will give us information on your digestive enzyme levels and potential food intolerance's. These things will all impact how you digest and absorb your food.

This knowledge is extremely useful and will help us when creating your personal plan.



Once this has been determined, looking at the integrity of your gut is next. For example, from various imbalances, illnesses or inflammation increased intestinal permeability (leaky gut) can result. This is effectively damage to the intestinal lining where larger particles and bacteria are then able to pass through the lining and into the blood system. This would then cause an autoimmune response creating more inflammation and irritation.

In order to repair gut integrity it is important to determine the underlying factors causing the damage, which is something we look at together. You may need to change your habits, take specific supplements such as glutamine to help repair and fuel cells of the gut. You may need to increase specific nutrients essential for gut repair such as zinc or quercetin. You may also need to increase probiotics to help replenish your gut bacteria levels should they be imbalanced.

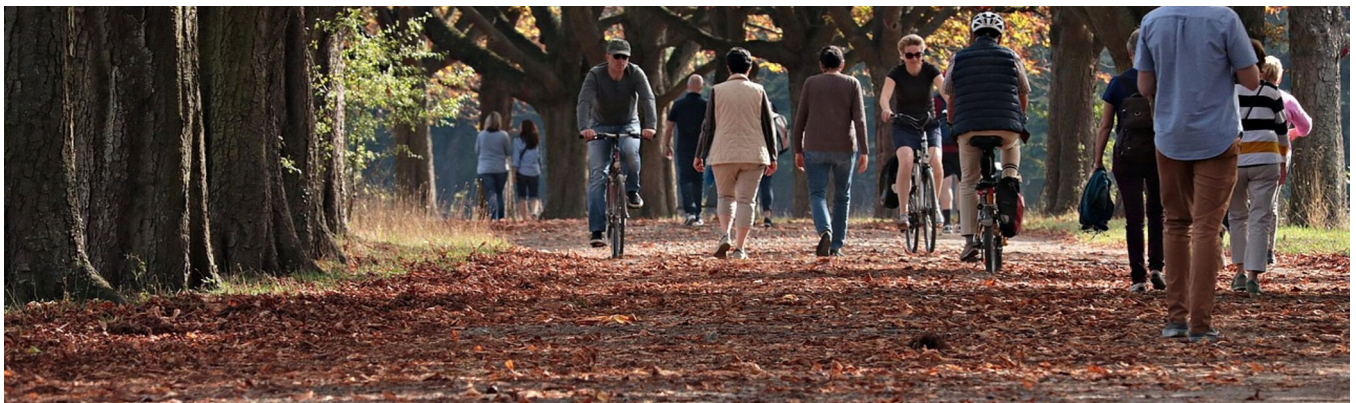
Ultimately, by working together, we will create a solution that has a positive impact on reducing your symptoms and putting your IBD into remission for the long term.

Once you have been to see your Doctor about your suspected IBD, you may then be referred to a specialist, this is typically an endocrinologist who may perform an endoscopy to confirm diagnosis.

At this point you may be put on medication to help with your IBD. This is then an opportunity for you to complement your treatment plan by working with a Nutritional Therapist to help manage your condition and discover the root cause of your condition. Any damage to the gut can be repaired through the use of specific nutrition and supplementation as well as looking at lifestyle changes.

Working alongside your GP or endocrinologist, we can look for the root causes of your symptoms and build a programme to help repair and heal the gut. This will optimise your recovery.

This will be done through personalised functional testing such as the use of a comprehensive stool analysis, the interpretation of the test and then following the results a personalised nutritional plan can be created that takes into consideration potential food intolerances and nutrient deficiencies.



Focus Area 3

MANAGE

With your IBD team in place which includes your GP, endocrinologist and Nutritional Therapist, you will have the best chances of keeping your IBD in remission.

There is often no single cause for damage to the gut, but often the main culprits are imbalances, gastrointestinal disease, chronic stress, environmental contaminants, overuse of alcohol, pathogenic bacterial presence, poor food choices and extended use of medications. Everybody is different and everyone will experience different symptoms originating from different contributors.

This is why I work closely with my clients to look at these main culprits, and create a long-term management programme.

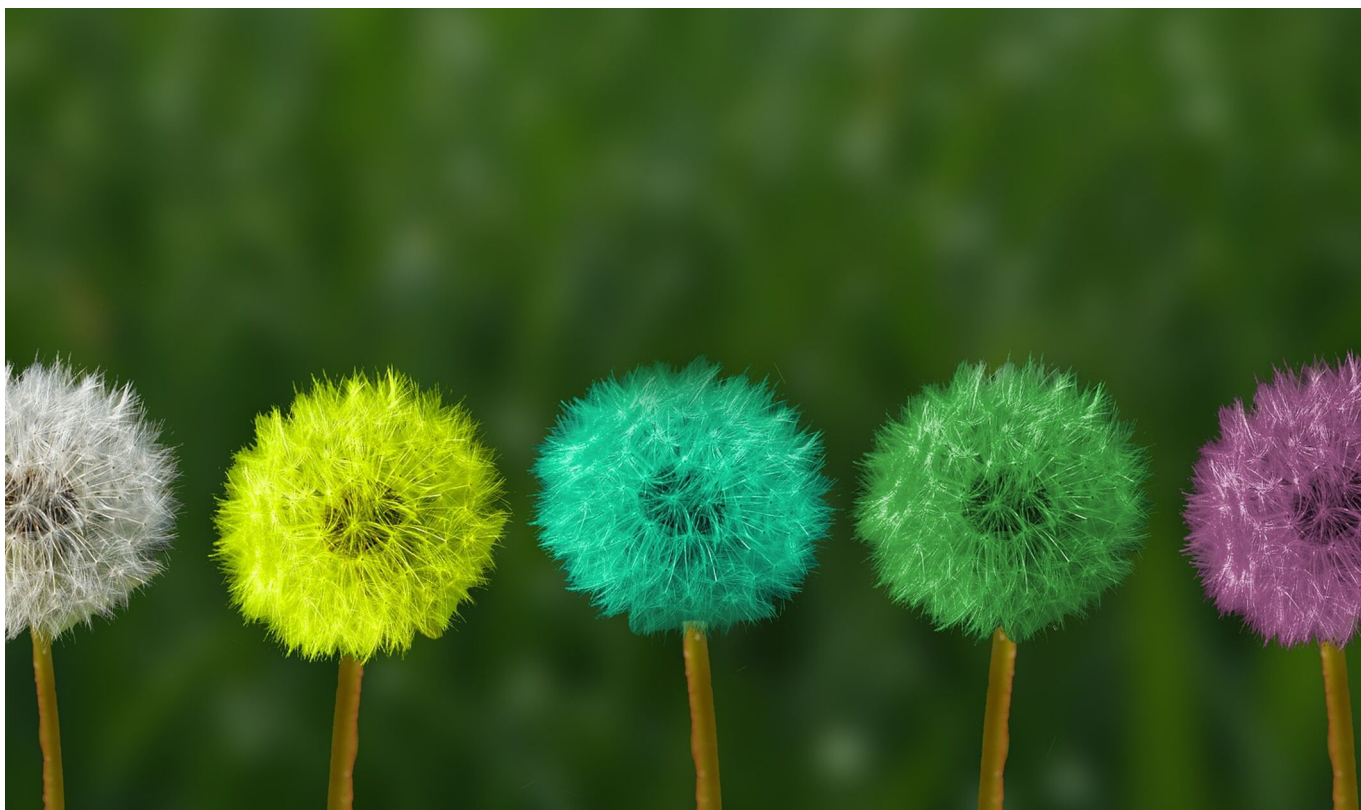
If you have a stressful lifestyle then it is important to discuss suitable options and

create a plan to manage your stress using techniques such as meditation, relaxation, exercise, breathing practice, prioritising problems as well as eating better. All these ideas will help to reduce your stress levels.

If you have gut dysbiosis then it is important to identify the imbalances and work to rebalance gut bacteria or remove pathogens using specific natural antimicrobials.

If you have a high level of toxic exposure, your immune system and therefore your ability to heal may be challenged. Toxic exposure will reduce your ability to absorb and store nutrients. Becoming aware of the potential chemicals / toxins that surround you and then managing to reduce this level will benefit our health, but especially our gut and liver function.





Education is key to understanding what is happening to your body and helping you move towards optimal health.

Working together we will create a programme specific to you that will boost the health of your gut and create a healthy happy environment.

By working our way through the contributing factors that we have discussed, we can create a personalised programme that takes into consideration your lifestyle and health history. I can create a comprehensive plan that will incorporate all of these factors. I aim to help you identify triggers, imbalances and deficiencies and then incorporate these into a plan that will help you to nourish, heal and repair your gut both in the short term, but more importantly for the long term too.

Helping you to manage your condition or symptoms on a long term basis is the number one goal.

Once we've worked out the root cause of your IBD we can then start to repair and heal your gut.

It is important that this is easily achievable and maintained on an ongoing basis in order to keep your gut healthy and happy.

We will create a nutritional programme that takes into consideration your likes and dislikes, the time you have available as well as the nutrients that you need.

By using my programme I aim to give you back a normal lifestyle, one where you no longer worry about where the toilet is, one with less pain and dramatically reduced symptoms so you can spend time on more important things.



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HOW CAN WE WORK TOGETHER?

The Gut Recovery Programme

As well as offering initial 1:1 and follow up consultations, I have designed the Gut Recovery Programme to give you the support, time and focus needed to get your digestive health optimal. It is a 12 week one-to-one programme with either face to face in clinic sessions in Abingdon or video coaching sessions online.

STEP 1 - Remove

In this stage I am looking for anything that is present in the body, environment or lifestyle that is causing biochemical movements or changes or if there is anything that is contributing to your symptoms or health issues. This might include parasites, bacteria, viruses, environmental toxins or foods that are causing an inflammatory response from your body.

STEP 2 - Replace

Here I look for anything that is missing from your body or life, that is required for health. This can include things such as vitamin and mineral levels in the body, diet components and physical activity.

STEP 3 - Repair

It will be important to repair tissues in the body that have been damaged by inflammation or injury. Healing your gut is a critical part of the programme. This can include the gut lining, the skin or your blood-brain barrier.

STEP 4 - Re-Inoculate

The microbial colony in your gut is very important for regaining and maintaining the health of your body and brain. In this step I will focus on foods and supplements that will nourish and nurture the amazing ecosystems that you have in your gut.

STEP 5 - Rebalance

The last part of the programme is where I look at you as a whole person as well as your life to ensure that all the pieces required for a healthy and happy life have been accounted for. This may include stress, family, social support, relationships, exercise, sleep, hydration, nutrition and genes.

For more information on what is included, how this will benefit you and how I can help please book in a free call to have a chat.

BOOK A CALL