

Leaky Gut & Food Inflammation Testing

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"I don't think someone can claim to do functional medicine unless they are looking for the underlying causes of inflammation, and food is one of the major triggers." That was a quote from Dr. Joel Evans, one of the instructors for the Institute for Functional Medicine, who was kind enough to share lunch as we discussed his favorite tests for assessment and treatment of leaky gut.

As a reminder, when we talk about "leaky gut" what we are really talking about is "a loss in intestinal barrier function." Dr. Evans and I discussed three different ways to assess leaky gut: candida, food sensitivities, and zonulin.

For food sensitivities, Dr. Evans gets the greatest clinical response when he tests for the humoral part of the immune system by using all 4 levels of IgG, the delayed immune response. He also tests for the innate part of the immune system by as-



sessing C compliment. By assessing both the humoral and innate parts of the immune system the major food sensitivities are identified. Dr. Evans said, "What's nice about this test is that only the major foods are highlighted and false positives are reduced to a minimum."

He uses a lab called KBMO Diagnostics which specializes in blood spot technology which makes it easier for both doctor and patient. KBMO's flagship product, the FIT test, measures both the delayed humoral response as well as the innate

response on 132 different foods, emulsifiers, food additives and chemicals. FIT stands for food inflammation test.

Dr. Evans said his staff does a blood spot test with virtually every new patient that leaves his office after their first visit. He shared that he believes in this test so much he only adds \$25.00 as a processing fee for his staff to perform, submit and track the results to keep it affordable. You can see a link to the right for a list of foods and substances tested on the FIT test.

One of the substances tested for is candida albicans. Candida is normally present in the bowel in small amounts as part of the gut flora. Dr. Evans shared that it's normal to have candida in the bowel; however, healthy intestinal barrier function should keep the fungus within the bowel. So, "If antibodies for candida can be measured in blood, we know that the intestinal barrier function has been compromised. In other words, the detection of candida antibodies in blood confirm "leaky gut" and give the clinician clear direction that healing the gut is step number one."

Yes, we would probably give emulsified oregano oil as ADP and probiotics like Bio-Doph-7 Plus to reduce the candida population; however, our discussion here is an objective way to assess leaky gut. As you know, leaky gut means increased levels of systemic inflammation.

The developer of the technology for the FIT test, an immunologist, Dr. Brent Dorval was involved with the identification of the HIV tests and making them commercially available. In an interview, Dr. Dorval shared that in addition to reactive foods, NSAIDs, other drugs, toxins, diabetes, injury, and (as most of us are aware) bacterial overgrowth and their byproducts like lipopolysaccharides (LPS) damage the gut lining.

Dr. Dorval shared that the sheer numbers of foods that show an immunological response give you an indirect clue regarding leaky gut. The FIT test is an objective measurement of the body's immunological response. The immunological response corresponds to systemic inflammation. So if you have a number of foods that are creating an immunologic response, you have greater levels of systemic inflammation. He feels that if a patient is reacting to 10-15 foods, you have

a 50% to 90% chance leaky gut is a major piece to the puzzle. He commented that by just avoiding the foods for 6 months the gut will heal.

We know a number of nutrients that will significantly speed that process. My favorites are L-Glutamine, IPS, short for intestinal permeability support and Immuno-gG from bovine colostrum. Of course, if a patient is sensitive to dairy on the FIT test, Immuno-gG would not be used.

Another way to assess leaky gut is by measuring for zonulin. Think of the intestinal lining as a wall of tightly joined cells that open and close as needed. Zonulin is the remote control that opens the tight junctions between cells. In healthy cells, zonulin is secreted, cells open and then close. However, in people with serious health conditions, particularly autoimmunity, it's like pressing and holding the open button on the remote. There's so much zonulin produced, therefore, the tight junctions get stuck open. So, "If you can measure zonulin in the blood, you are measuring evidence of tissue damage. The presence of zonulin gives you 95% plus confidence that a loss in intestinal function is occurring.

Unfortunately to measure for zonulin in a blood draw is required. Zonulin can be ordered as part of the FIT test or separately. Gliadin and intestinal dysbiosis are the main triggers for zonulin release.

It's an exciting time to be a wellness clinician. Tests are available like the FIT test as well as blood zonulin which can direct your therapies and show you and your patient when to start and stop nutritional therapies.

Thanks for reading this week's edition. I'll see you next Tuesday.