

Ep 64

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SPEAKERS

Leah Brueggemann



Leah Brueggemann 00:03

Welcome to another episode of the balancing hormones naturally podcast where we offer actions and steps you can take today to start balancing your hormones naturally. This is your podcast host, Leah Brueggemann. I am a Functional Diagnostic nutritional practitioner. I am honored and excited to be your guide on your journey to better understanding your hormonal health and how it affects your everyday life. Hey, ladies, welcome back to another episode. I have an amazing guest for you. This is Dr. Heather Finley. And we're going to talk about gut health which I'm so excited about because I think every person that joins like the Facebook group, or is in my DMs you always have a question about bloating, like always, always. So we will dive into that. But I would love for you to share a little bit about where you got where you are now. What started off.



01:06

Oh, boy, that's like, that can be a whole podcast episode. But thank you, Leah, for having me. I'm excited to be here and connect with your community. I got into gut health because I was born constipated. That's what I Oh, I literally was born constipated. So if you are like me, I hear you and I see you. And I know how terrible who is. But you don't have to be like that forever. Really, I was sent on this mission. I mean, my whole life pretty much to solve my own constipation was an athlete struggled with constipation. I think now looking back as a result of just overtraining, depletion, nutrition wise, went to college, selfishly to become a dietitian to learn about digestive health so that I could potentially help myself. Turns out, I still couldn't help myself when I graduated, dealt with tons of imposter syndrome. How am I supposed to be able to help other people if I can't even help myself? So then it kind of went down this rabbit hole of functional medicine and really started to put the pieces together. Okay, it wasn't just that what I was eating that was causing my constipation and my bloating. It was my lifestyle. It was my mindset. It was how I was eating, it was all these different things. So when I did my doctorate program that was more focused on functional medicine, I realized, oh, my gosh, I have been missing so many pieces. And so so many lightbulb moments there. But that's why now I help women struggling with digestive issues of all kinds find relief. By looking at really getting you outside of the box. I think the conventional medical world tries to put you in a box,

oh, you have bloating, you're constipated, you have IBS. Here's a handout. And my goal is to get you out of the box. So you have IBS and you were given a handout. But let's get you out of the box and let's figure out why you're bloated. And why are constipated why you're having acid reflux, et cetera.



Leah Brueggemann 03:13

I have to chuckle a little bit when you say you're born constipated? Because actually feel like I know what that means. One of my best friends. All of her babies have been dealing with like colic, and she's like, they just don't put they just don't poop for like days. I'm like, That must be what it's like.



03:31

It's terrible. Yeah. i Yeah, not a fun, not a fun situation at all.



Leah Brueggemann 03:38

No. Okay. So let's talk about when you're getting outside of the box, like, what are some of the things that you would recommend or you see are the causes for the constipation and the bloating that people don't typically think of? Because I know you've heard this, like, you have got issues, you better get on a probiotic. So let's let's look at some other solutions. Yeah.



04:03

So you've got issues, you might not need a probiotic, the probiotic might make your digestive issues worse. And if it did, that actually tells us a lot about what's going on. If you took a robot probiotic and you are in pain and bloating and felt terrible. That shows me a lot about what's going on with your gut bacteria, but some common causes of constipation, bloating, really digestive issues as a whole number one stress. So Leah and I just recorded a podcast episode on my podcast all about minerals, we talked a lot about stress. Stress really is like the root cause of all root causes. stress affects your digestive enzymes, your stomach acid, your gut motility. It even affects your mindset. And you know, the more that I dig into this, your mindset, and what you think about your digestive symptoms really affects this times that you're having, if you think I'm going to be bloated, how does that actually affect the actions that you're taking that then make or break your bloating. So stress and mindset are a big one that people often are missing sleep, when you are not sleeping, and you are not resting and digesting, and taking time to relax, your gut cannot work. Your gut wants to work like a clock. So it wants to be off when it's dark, and it wants to be on when it's light. And so sleep and circadian rhythm, a very broad topic, but very, very important for gut health. The next one that's often missed is hydration. Not necessarily like drink more water. Um, yes, water is important. But let's get your cells to actually absorb the water, you could be drinking all this water, it could be going straight through you can be if you're having the symptoms of like, I drink all this water, but I pee all the time, then maybe we need to look at your minerals. So goes into the other episode on that. But yeah, minerals and like actually cellular hydration is really, really common. So those would be the top three like kind of more lifestyle and missed pieces. But then on more like a digestive

level. Low stomach acid, it's a very common root cause that we see. Liver gallbladder pancreas issues, definitely another root cause which is affected by stomach acid, gut motility. There's even now like they're calling SIBO or small intestinal bacterial overgrowth, a motility disorder, when your bowels are not moving, and you're not clearing things out effectively. Then, of course, your bloating, you have food and waste sitting in your gut and fermenting and causing gas that you don't want. So that could be another one. And then I guess one that I missed earlier is meal hygiene. And this concept of like how you're eating? Are you chewing your food? Are you taking time to eat? Which I'm kind of a hypocrite sitting here? Because I was finishing my breakfast as Leah and I were starting but you know, for the most part, are you sitting down? And are you chewing your food? Are you taking time to eat a meal? And also what are you thinking about that meal? Are you thinking this is going to make me bloated? And getting into a stress response right before you eat stress affects your saliva and your enzymes and the whole process of digestion. So those are some of the top things I'm sure that I missed many, but those are the most common ones.



Leah Brueggemann 07:39

I love that I see SIBO and IBS. I kind of like to think about those as like garbage can diagnosis is because it's like it covers, they're like not really sure what to do with you. So they're like, Oh, you can just blame everything on IBS or SIBO. And I have actually had a client one time with SIBO This is funny because she was diagnosed with SIBO. But she would just have like diarrhea all the time. And so like she was moving things but not efficiently or well. And it just turned out she had parasites, you know, like we got rid of the parasites and like her SIBO just magically disappeared. So I love that you have to go outside the box. Because like when you just get that diagnosis, I think, I don't know, I think in some ways you go yay, I have a diagnosis. This makes sense to me. But then you kind of isolate yourself into like, well, this is just how my life is going to be. I have IBS I have constipation. And so often, like if you think foods going to, you know, make your stomach hurt, like yes, it's going to make your stomach hurt. So I think that's really important to pay attention to. So if you are someone who wakes up and you don't regularly go to the bathroom, or you just feel bloated or like heavy feeling, what would be some first steps are like Where should they start looking or start doing things. You know how I love a good old tart cherry juice to help you sleep or topical magnesium gel if you're having some trouble getting in your magnesium. And I have sent you to 1000 Different brands to try and get all of these different products. But I'm very excited to share with you ro Casa organics, which I'm so excited to partner with because they have such an incredible ingredient policy as well as their products are awesome. Literally. That's all I got to say. So again, a friend introduced me to these products and I'm like okay, I'll try them out. loved their ingredient policy. And so I started trying out different things literally went out but spent my own money you guys, I'm gonna try these things out for sure before I recommend them. And the things that just spoke to me to torture us has chamomile extract and valerian root. You guys, it was the tipping point for helping me asleep so much better while I'm pregnant. I even give a teaspoon of it to Landon and he's sleeping so much better. So we all know the troubles we've had with Landon sleeping, we use their elderberry juice, we use their magnesium gel, they have a muscle and joint cream, which when I popped my rib out if you're following me on social media that was oh, it was so helpful. So they have a tiger saw which is using the plant based Bok coochie all to help with stress marks you can use as well, you are pregnant, they have cleaning supplies. And I have just been sending so many clients to them, because they have such an amazing ingredient policy, they have great prices. And you don't have to go to five different companies to get five different products, I can get all five of my products at one company, which I'm very thankful for. So those are a few of my favorite products. I swear by that tortures you guys. And I reached

out to them to get a discount code for you. And it's a super easy to remember discount code. It's le H money I'm super easy. So definitely go try them out. They're giving you 20% off your first order, you will not regret it literally the only thing you get is the tart cherry juice. You will love me forever. But they do have amazing cleaning supplies. And like I said, I love their body butters and their hair spreads for postpartum hair regrowth literally there's there's so many options. And like I said their ingredient policy is it's really, really good. So I'm very excited to partner with them.



11:56

Yeah, so when you bloat can tell us a lot about why you bloat so if you're waking up bloated, then you likely are really constipated. So the first thing that you're going to want to do is focus on getting your bowels moving. And there's lots of things that you can do for that. But one of those, which is still your quote, What did you say you can't poop if you're always on the run, you're not. The first thing is making time to go to the bathroom, we live a very gogogo lifestyle. And if you are waking up rushing to make your coffee running out the door to get your kids to school and go to work. Of course you can't go to the bathroom, you didn't make time to do it. So how can you maybe make some space in your calendar for 10 minutes to wake up, drink some water with minerals in it, hopefully, and maybe do a digestive massage on your abdomen or some digestive yoga really quickly, then sit on the toilet, do some deep breathing and try to relax. Because if your body doesn't have the cue to go, it's not going to if you're in a fight or flight response, it's not worried about having a bowel movement, it's worried about being chased by a bear. So if you're waking up bloated, that's number one is make sure you make time to try to go but also focusing on hydration and improving your cellular dehydration. If you have that. And then looking at fiber intake, are you getting enough fiber? Are you getting too much fiber, I feel like people kind of span the spectrum there where they're either eating no fiber, because it all makes them bloated and they feel super uncomfortable. Or they're just eating tons of fiber. And they're super constipated because it's just too much. So really about 30 grams is about what you need each day. To some people that might seem like a lot to some people that might seem like a little. But if you're eating like all your fiber in the morning and no fiber the rest of the day, that's not going to be good either. So trying to include a fiber source with each meal. Lots of foods have fiber, obviously fruits and vegetables, but even nuts and seeds, beans, lagoons, chia seeds, flax seeds, all those things have fiber. So try to include a fiber source with each meal to keep your bowels moving. And make sure you're getting a steady drip of fiber versus just a bomb of fiber one time a day, and then nothing else the rest of the day.



Leah Brueggemann 14:29

I really liked that. And that brings me to a question, actually. So I saw you talking about resistant starches the other day when you have issues with fiber. Can you talk about that really quick?



14:42

Yes. So a lot of times when you're bloated, you might have trouble digesting fiber. So you might say, you know, I guess one question to ask yourself is like, Do you feel better eating low carb? Or do you feel better when you don't eat any carbohydrates? If the answer to those questions is

yes, then what we're learning about your digestive symptoms is potentially that you have dysbiosis, or an imbalance of good and bad bacteria in your gut, when you have this imbalance. The interesting piece about this whole thing is, as humans, we actually cannot digest fiber, our gut bacteria digest fiber for us. So when you have an abundance of quote unquote, good bacteria, in your gut, you can digest a wide variety of fiber. When you have an overgrowth of content, potentially bad bacteria, it's harder to do that. So if you're avoiding fiber, because of the symptoms, that's not a good long term solution, because we know that the diversity of bacteria in your gut, which are fed by fiber, improve your overall gut health. So one stop gap for that is if you're having trouble digesting fiber, one way that you can improve your gut health without maybe the unwanted side effects of fiber is resistant starch. So resistant starch is what forms when you cook and cool starch. So you cook a potato, you let it cool, and it forms resistant starch that actually has a good impact also on blood sugar, and so many other things, not just digestive health, but this resistant starch basically acts like a prebiotic fiber in that it feeds your good gut bacteria, and will improve the diversity of bacteria in your gut. In I think the most common question that I get with resistant starch is, well what happens if I heat it, if you heat it, it still maintains the resistant starch, the idea is just cook it cool it, you can reheat it as many times as you want. But you still get the resistant starch, you still get the benefits of feeding your gut bacteria.



Leah Brueggemann 16:52

That is so cool. Like such an easy thing to start adding if you're like slowly trying to get your fiber up because so often, like people like I just can't eat vegetables. I can't eat any of this. Like it just makes me bloated. It's like, well, I'll work on that. God. I love that such an easy hack, okay. Also, I have to laugh. Okay, so you know how you always say like, guys take forever to like, poop. Okay, so I asked my husband about this the other day, I was like, why don't you just like, wait until you feel like you have to go then go to the bathroom. He might kill me for saying this. Probably not. But he's like, Well, you just know that you should go like you should be going. So you just like pick a time you go and you wait and you relax. And then you go. And I'm like, that's kind of like having a healthy like poop routine in the morning. You're like, you know, you should go you give your body the space to do it. Maybe that's why like, a lot of times guys have better digestion.



17:55

See the same question because we talk about these things. And he said, The reason he does that is so he can have some alone time. So I think maybe with like two kids, he's like, Alright, I just need to like have a second.



Leah Brueggemann 18:11

Ah, I'm gonna have to ask him maybe that's the true reason. I don't think so. Cuz he typically does it like after like, Landon's in bed. He has awesome digestion, though. I asked him I was like, How many times do you go a day since like, this is like such a big thing for guys. He goes, I go like, however many times I eat, like three times, so I'm like, dang. Good job. Anyway, it kind of made me laugh. So, um, can we talk a little bit about traveling with digestion and bloating? Because I think that if you've if you ever have bloating, you know, it's just a big fear. When

you're traveling. You're like, oh my gosh, like, am I gonna be able to wear my favorite outfit? Or am I gonna look 10 months pregnant? So are there things that you can do to maybe help your digestion help bowel movement, stay regular while you're traveling?



19:07

Yes. And I think it actually starts before you travel. So the reason that I'm bringing this up is because we've all had an experience. While not we've all if you've have digestive issues, you've likely had an experience where you were traveling, you were super miserable, and swore off traveling forever. If you listen to my podcast, episode one, I tell a really funny story about being in San Francisco with my family. So you can check that out. I won't share that again here. But it really starts with what you think about travel. So if you think that you've always been bloated while traveling or that you're always gonna have digestive symptoms while you travel, then that's all your nervous system knows it only knows that travel is terrible, and that I'm going to be bloated and constipated. So some of this comes down to to how you're going to expose your nervous system to the experience that you're going to have. So thinking about going on this beach trip with your family, thinking about sitting on the beach, and in your bathing suit and not being bloated thinking about building a sandcastle with your kids and enjoying the experience versus thinking about your stomach, and replaying that scenario over and over and over in your mind till it feels real, because then when you actually get on the beach, and you are building a sandcastle with your kid, your nervous system is already primed for that experience. We have had so many clients do this. And one of the stories that I share often is about a client who went on her honeymoon, and she was so nervous about it. And we had her just play this experience in her head before it actually happened. And she thought we were crazy. And she came back and she was like, okay, that actually was really helpful. Like, you know, beyond all the things you told me to bring in, like travel hacks, I needed to go in with a positive mindset. So that's tip number one. But then on more of the practical, like, what can you do side of things. One of the things that is really helpful, that I see as a big trigger with travel is dehydration, you're maybe not near water as much as you normally are. So bring a water bottle, bring some electrolytes with you try to fill up that water bottle and take it with you everywhere you go. People might think you're crazy, I always get made fun of for having my water bottle with me. But It literally makes such a difference if you are hydrated, especially if you tend to drink more alcohol whenever you are traveling, you need to focus on hydration as well. And also if you're more active, you know if you're walking or you're at the beach, you're probably going to be more dehydrated. So bring a reusable water bottle with you and electrolytes.



Leah Brueggemann 21:53

Just a quick break to remind you that if you are not already seed cycling with us, you should be seed cycling with us. The benefits of seed cycling are amazing. They contain so many nutrients that are necessary for hormonal balance, including zinc, manganese, vitamin E, all of the good things amazing for a quality. And while seed cycling is not the end picture like that's not all that you'll have to do to maybe achieve the things that you're looking for in your health. You guys it is the easiest thing that you can do. So one tablespoon of pumpkin, and one tablespoon of flax seeds from your period to ovulation. And then switch to sesame and sunflower. So that is one tablespoon of each of those seeds every single day. You want to be buying whole organic, and then grind them before you eat them. The reason why you don't want to buy ground is that

they go rancid within a couple of weeks. So unless you know where your seeds are coming from how long they were sitting on the shelf, they're probably rancid by the time you get them. Okay, so start seed cycling with us. And as always, if you want to make this even simpler for yourself, that is where Funk at Wellness seeds can literally change your life. They are organic, they are certified B Corp, all of their seeds are like they get them from the best places. And you can get them shipped to your door. So it literally doesn't get any simpler than that. And it's a subscription. So literally happy hormone subscription box. I can sign up for that. Yes, yes, please. So you can get yours shipped to your door right now they're only in the US. So if you're outside of the US, I apologize. But if you are inside of the US take advantage of the flash sale they have going on. You can use code Lea Lea H 20 to save 20% off of your order and you even save already on your subscription. So I love cycling. But I will say that sometimes it can get hard to stick to because it's hard to find quality seeds. And sometimes they forget to grind them and then I don't get my season for the day. So forget wellness makes it super simple. Literally they're shipped right to my door. They grind them right before they ship them. So I know that they're not rancid. They have certified B Corp companies that they get their seeds from so they're super high quality. They're organic. So yeah, I'm much more consistent with my seed cycling now. Thanks to Funk and Wellness.



24:28

Number two is fiber. That's what you want to be thinking about. You likely are not eating the same on vacation that you do at home. So how can you incorporate fiber into your food? Whether that means breeding some like to go travel sticks of fiber, like the regular girl sticks or the Heather's tummy fiber sticks or like a bag of chia seeds I don't know to add to your oatmeal at the hotel or yogurt or whatever it is. Bring some fiber sources with you they're super shelf stable. They're not going to go bad but that way you can focus on getting consistent fiber throughout the day. Also, making sure you're eating enough. I think sometimes on vacation people are like on the go, they're like at the beach, and oh, we'll just eat snacks for lunch. And like they just might not be eating as much as they normally do on a day to day basis, or eating consistently enough. So bring snacks that preferably have a little bit of fiber, protein, carbohydrate, all the things to help make sure that you're not going too long without eating and keeping your blood sugar stable throughout the trip. And then on like a symptom relief standpoint, peppermint capsules can be really great. If you're struggling with bloating, you can get peppermint capsules. Or you can bring like peppermint tea or ginger tea with you if you have access to hot water, you could even cold brew some tea in your hotel or at your Airbnb. I'm drinking ginger and peppermint tea can be great for digestive health, peppermint and more from like an anti-spasmodic, getting rid of gas standpoint, and then ginger and more from a gut motility standpoint, it's gonna get your gut to contract and move a little bit if you're really constipated. So those things can be super helpful. And then the last thing I would say is movement. So if you have the ability, try to get in some kind of movement each day, even if it's a 10 minute walk outside, your gut needs movement to contract. So if you're sitting more than you normally are or your routine is off, try to keep some semblance of a routine, if possible, and includes some level of movement. And that should help as well.



Leah Brueggemann 26:46

I love those, especially the one about water. Because often, you know, a lot of women will say, hey, like I've been really constipated, or my bowel movements are just not regular, like, okay, you know, how is your sleep? And how much water have you been drinking? They're like, well,

you know, I've just been getting in, like less water than normal. But like, it shouldn't make that drastic of a difference. It's like, ah, actually, it can. Sometimes your basics are just so important. Okay, so I feel like there's a lot of different trains we can go from, like when people are dealing with bloating, I feel like something I hear, you know, with gut issues is people are like, Oh, I'm just gonna take a food sensitivity test. And that will like solve all my issues. Could you talk about that?



27:37

Yeah, food sensitivity testing such a hot topic, you've probably gotten Instagram, an Instagram ad for this at some point or another if you have been searching for relief for bloating. So the concept behind food sensitivity tests, and obviously every test is different, depending on what type of technology it's using, and what it's actually measuring. But in general, if you have 75, food sensitivities, if you run one of these tests, and it literally comes back with every single food that you always eat every single day, and you're like, oh my gosh, what am I supposed to eat, because these are the foods that I eat that I like, and I don't like anything that's on the green list. And you know, I feel super discouraged. All that's showing us is that there's something going on in your gut. It's showing us that your gut is potentially permeable or you know, the like trendy term for this, which isn't actually a thing is leaky gut. Leaky gut is intestinal permeability. And if your intestines are permeable, food proteins are leaking through food particles and and other things too. And your immune system is basically causing a reaction. So all that's showing us is that you're having an immune response to food. And if we can improve the underlying gut issues, so the permeability, the digestive markers, your mucosal lining, etc, then the food becomes less of an issue. So yes, if you eliminate those foods, you may feel better. But it's not the long term solution to your problems. You might feel great if you completely change your diet. But is it because you completely changed your diet? And we know that variety is really important for gut health? Or is it because you have an underlying gut issue as well? Probably both. So really, if you're looking at food sensitivities, what we want to think about is why do you have the food sensitivities? And how can we then address the underlying issues that are causing them?



Leah Brueggemann 29:46

Yeah, and I, I say the same thing, because when people will take out the food sensitivities, or like, it's always foods that you're commonly eating, it's because those are the ones you reacting to because they're the ones you're eating then you'll start eating different foods. But if you don't change the root cause you then start reacting to the new foods you're eating. So then you're like, I can't eat anything, which is so important. So, okay, so many good nuggets here just on the basics. You know, I feel like we we overlook the basics all the time, like, are you sleeping? Are you drinking enough water? Are you eating slowly. So if you were just going to like pull out your Golden Globe, what would be some foods that you would recommend people eat daily to help support their gut health.



30:44

So instead of daily, I'm going to talk about it weekly. Okay, so we know from research that the wider variety of foods that you can include in your diet, the more diversity you have in your out. So the like. Really. the biggest predictor of a healthy gut is the diversity of foods that you

eat. And you might not be able to eat diverse amount of foods because of underlying gut issues, which means you need to address those. So really, the goal is 30 plants a week. So you're probably thinking like, gosh, that's a lot of fruits and vegetables. But plants are not just fruits and vegetables, plants are fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes, whole grains. There's herbs, spices, there's lots of things that are considered plants. So really, it's easy, like if you think about making, let's say you're making a pasta sauce, if you have tomatoes, but you maybe add some garlic in there, onions, mushrooms, shredded zucchini or carrots, like that's already five in one meal. So doing that over a week, it's pretty easy. So if you think about what you can add to your diet versus what you can take away. That's the ultimate mindset shift for gut health. What can I add to improve gut health, but some of my favorite foods to include would be prebiotic fibers. Those are the fibers that specifically feed your gut bacteria. So things like asparagus and onions and bananas and oats. There's lots of different foods that contain prebiotic fibers. Another class of foods that I love is poly phenols. poly phenols are plant compounds that also similar to resistant starch act like a prebiotic. These are like your dark red and in purple foods, like your cherries and your blueberries. Any kind of dark colored food that you can think of even like green tea is high in poly phenols. And then lastly, the one that we talked about earlier resistant starch, so cooked and cooled starch, potatoes, rice, etc. Cooking and cooling starch and improving and creating resistant starch is really helpful. So if you can think about each day, did I have a source of prebiotic? Did I have a poly phenol? Did I have a resistant starch you're doing pretty good?



Leah Brueggemann 33:16

Oh, I love that. That's actually not that complicated. I feel like if you win, you can add spices in there. That helps. And also



33:26

if you want to be like super extra fermented foods, so that would be like on the cake. So sauerkraut, kimchi be cavas yogurt, cottage cheese, all the great fermented foods.



Leah Brueggemann 33:42

I need to figure out how to like sauerkraut. I think that is one of the most disgusting firms out there.



33:50

I love it.



Leah Brueggemann 33:52

But I have started making my own yogurt. So there we go. I can have that. But that is super simple. So like the meal preppers are probably like living their best life right now because they're like, Hey, I have resistant starch all the time because I make my food at the beginning

of the week. So that's that can be really helpful, I guess. Yeah. Okay, so where can people find you? How can they connect with you? We're gonna link your podcast below obviously because everyone wants to go listen to that story. But tell us where we can find you.



34:30

If you listen to that story, please send me a DM telling me your travel stories so we can you know misery and company right? But everyone can find me I hang out the most on Instagram. It's at Dr. Heather Finley it's si en el EY I'm also on LinkedIn and Tik Tok and all those places but I'm, I hang up primarily on Instagram. And then if you want to check out my podcast, it's the love your gut podcast on all the podcast places And then my website is Dr. Heather finley.co. So



Leah Brueggemann 35:04

perfect. We will link those on the show notes so you guys can go check her out. Thank you so much for being on.



35:13

Thanks for having me.



Leah Brueggemann 35:15

Thank you for listening to today's episode of balancing hormones naturally. If you found this helpful, I would love for you to share it with a friend and post it on your stories and tag balancing hormones actually podcast so we can get this message out. You can find me on Instagram at Leah underscore br You EG and I would absolutely love to hear from you