# Understanding leaky gut and its impact on health



Recent research has heightened interest in gut health, with growing awareness of how the intestinal microbiome influences the immune system. The gut barrier functions as a semipermeable membrane, protecting the body from harmful substances while facilitating nutrient and water absorption. However, complications arise when the gut lining sustains damage, which can lead to what is commonly known as "leaky gut."

Increased intestinal permeability, the technical term for leaky gut, occurs when larger molecules, toxins, and disease-causing microbes pass through the gut barrier into the bloodstream. This condition has been linked to various health issues, including inflammatory bowel diseases (IBDs), irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and celiac disease.

According to the nutrition app ZOE, there are nine symptoms associated with increased intestinal permeability that individuals should be aware of. These symptoms include diarrhoea, increased gas, abdominal pain or discomfort, constipation, blood in stool, nausea or vomiting, fever or night sweats, fatigue, and unexplained weight loss. ZOE further elaborates that "medical tests may identify other issues along with a leaky gut, such as gut ulcers or dysbiosis." Dysbiosis refers to the imbalance of the beneficial and harmful bacteria that constitute the gut microbiome.

Experts identify numerous risk factors for developing increased intestinal permeability. A diet low in fibre and high in sugars and fats, excessive alcohol consumption, and frequent use of pain relief medications such as aspirin and ibuprofen are among the primary contributors. Moreover, factors like food allergies, high levels of blood fats and blood sugar, inflammatory bowel diseases, insulin resistance, liver conditions, and obesity can significantly increase the likelihood of this condition.

Despite leaky gut not being officially recognised as a medical diagnosis, ZOE has provided several practical recommendations to help lower intestinal permeability and enhance gut health. A diet resembling the Mediterranean style is advocated, embracing a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes, alongside a higher intake of probiotics and fermented foods. Additionally, adopting healthy lifestyle practices such as ensuring sufficient sleep, regular physical activity, effective stress management, avoiding smoking, and judicious use of antibiotics can further support gut health.

As awareness about gut health continues to evolve, these findings highlight the importance of understanding and addressing factors that may contribute to intestinal permeability.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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