

Alternative Medicine

Colon Therapy

"The therapeutic goals of colon therapy are to balance body chemistry, eliminate waste, and restore proper tissue and organ function."

-Drew Collins, N.D.

A healthy colon is essential for the absorption of vital nutrients and the natural elimination of bodily waste and toxins. Colon therapy promotes healthy colon function and can ease a range of problems from headache and backache to arthritis and hypertension.

The colon, along with the skin, kidneys, and lungs, is a major organ for eliminating bodily waste. The healthy function of the colon is essential for good digestion and the proper absorption of nutrients. If bowel movements are not consistent, waste products and toxins are not eliminated in a regular manner, and health can be compromised. Colon therapy uses a series of colonic water flushes to clean and detoxify the lower intestine and aid in the reconstitution of intestinal flora.

According to Drew Collins, N.D., of Prescott Valley, Arizona, "The therapeutic goals of colon therapy are to balance body chemistry, eliminate waste, and restore proper tissue and organ function." Ideally, says Dr. Collins, colon therapy also involves integration of appropriate diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. These include, along with the irrigation of the colon, an analysis of fecal structure and chemistry, an evaluation of environmental, immunological, and psychosomatic influences, and, often, a recommended program of exercise.

Alternative Medicine

The Colon's Role in Health and Disease

The colon (large intestine, rectum, and anus) is a key component of the gastrointestinal (GI) system, the largest system in the body. The length of the gastrointestinal tract is between twenty-eight and thirty feet, with a surface area of nearly six thousand square feet.

The proper functioning of the colon is essential to overall health. When the colon is unable to function efficiently, an accumulation of toxins can build up in the lymph, bloodstream, and intestines. Its proper function is dependent on:

- **A whole foods diet:** Especially recommended are such high-fiber foods as grains, legumes, vegetables, and fruit.
- **A balance of favorable bacteria:** A healthy GI tract contains nearly sixty varieties of bacteria or microflora which aid digestion, promote the manufacturing

- of vital nutrients, help to maintain proper pH (acid-base) balance, and keep harmful bacteria in check.
- **Healthy colonic mucosa:** The mucosa, or surface cell layer lining the intestines, allows for the passage of nutrients into the bloodstream, secretes hormones and lubricants, and prevents the absorption of toxins.
 - **Proper muscle tone:** Approximately fifteen contractive movements occur in the colon per minute. Known as peristalsis, this action moves food through the intestinal tract and helps to maximize absorption of valuable liquid and nutrients, while eliminating the stool.
 - **Timely evacuation of waste:** Regular bowel movement and elimination prevents the buildup of toxic substances that result from putrefaction and excessive fermentation. According to Joseph Vargas, Ph.D., founder and Director of the Wholistic Health Center in Houston, Texas, "Bowel movements should be thorough and frequent, two or three daily, to prevent toxic residues and by-products from forming or remaining in the body."

Bowel Toxemia

Dr. Collins states, "When the colon becomes burdened with an accumulation of waste material-impacted feces, bacteria, fungi, viruses, parasites, and dead cellular material-the result is termed 'bowel toxemia'. This condition causes inflammation and swelling of the bowel surface, and can lead to a host of other health problems. Normal absorption of nutrients, secretory functions, and normal muscular function of the colon are disrupted. Irregular and inefficient bowel movement is the result, further suppressing recovery and encouraging other problems."

Bowel toxemia and improper digestion can cause a buildup in the intestines of pathological bacteria, viruses, and fermented and putrefactive gases that become dangerous to the body and can lead to other illnesses.

Leaky Gut Syndrome

When toxic matter and undigested food, collected in the intestines as a result of bowel toxemia, are absorbed from the bowels into the bloodstream, the result is a recognized medical condition known as "leaky gut syndrome."

The undigested food molecules act as antigens, foreign substances that provoke an immune reaction. Many of these antigens are similar in structure to normal body components, and the antibodies produced to fight them can destroy healthy tissues. Recent studies suggest this immune reaction contributes to, or may cause, rheumatoid arthritis and other degenerative diseases.¹

Bacteria and their toxic by-products can also be absorbed from the bowels into the bloodstream. A deficiency of secretory IgA, an antibody in the colon that binds food and bacterial antigens, can cause an influx of antigens from the bowels into the bloodstream. These antigens can induce autoimmune diseases such as thyroid

disease, myasthenia gravis (a disease characterized by great muscular weakness), and some forms of meningitis, according to Patrick Donovan, N.D.²

Toxins that enter the bloodstream from the colon also burden the liver, circulatory system, lymphatic system, and excretory organs such as the lungs and kidneys. Because the liver plays such a vital role in clearing the blood of toxins, any impairment of liver function may aggravate the damage already done by bowel toxemia. "Foreign chemicals in the body, whether produced from ingestion or chemical interaction, chemical breakdown, or putrefaction of foodstuff in the fermentive processes, can alter RNA (ribonucleic acid) and DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid)," says Dr. Vargas. "RNA and DNA contain the blueprint for cellular manufacturing and, if tampered with, abnormal cell reproduction can occur. Many scientists believe this provokes cancer and other autoimmune diseases. All these factors make a properly functioning colon imperative to the maintenance of good health."

History of Colon Therapy

As a treatment for disease, colon therapy was recorded in the earliest known medical documents.³ Eighty years ago, natural health pioneer John Harvey Kellogg, M.D., of Battle Creek, Michigan, used colon therapy to avoid surgery in all but twenty of forty thousand of his patients afflicted with gastrointestinal disease.⁴

The popularity of colon therapy reached its zenith in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. At that time, colonic irrigation machines were a common sight in hospitals and physicians' offices. Although interest declined with the advent of pharmaceutical and surgical treatments, colon therapy is once more gaining in popularity and is now commonly used by alternative health practitioners.

References

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3. Thakkur, C. *Ayurveda: The Indian Art and Science of Medicine*. New York: ASI Publications, 1974.
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Alternative Medicine

Conditions Benefited by Colon Therapy

"Colon therapy releases toxins, cleanses the blood, stimulates the immune system, and aids in restoring the pH balance in the body," says Connie Allred, President of the American Colon Therapy Association. Colon therapy can help relieve a wide range of symptoms related to colon dysfunction, including:

- Backache
- Headache
- Bad breath
- Coated tongue
- Gas
- Bloating
- Indigestion
- Constipation
- Sinus and/or lung congestion
- Skin problems
- Loss of concentration
- Fatigue

Colon therapy also helps to reestablish regular bowel movements by restoring muscle tone and normal peristalsis. According to Dr. Collins, as the squeezing action of peristalsis moves the blood and lymph in the region of the colon, the cells lining the colon excrete toxins and waste products into both the colon and bloodstream for elimination.

Peristalsis also stimulates the liver to produce more bile. Increased bile production aids the absorption of lipids (liquid fats) and fat-soluble vitamins, aids in the removal of immune complexes (substances formed when antibodies attach to antigens), and assists in the breakdown of cholesterol. Increased bile production also induces proper blood clotting and helps prevent the production of gallstones.

Colon therapy is most effective when used in conjunction with special exercises and alternative therapies such as acupuncture and homeopathy, says Dr. Collins. He uses colon therapy as an adjunct treatment for a wide range of conditions, including hypertension, arthritis, depression, parasites, and lung problems.

In the case of hypertension, the muscular movements initiated by colon therapy help to control blood pressure by regulating the autonomic nervous system. Arthritis

patients benefit because of the direct stimulation of the immune system, states Dr. Collins. This may help to remove immune complexes from the joints, a major factor in rheumatoid arthritis.

Colon therapy can also help rid the body of parasites without a need for the heavy drugs usually prescribed to treat them. Dr. Collins reports of a patient who had a case of giardiasis (a form of parasites). She received colon therapy treatments and an Ayurvedic oral flush with salt water. After several treatments that included pancreatic enzymes, she tested clear of the parasites.



Recommended Reading

Colon Health: Key to a Vibrant Life. Walker, Norman. Prescott, AZ: Norwalk Press, 1979.

A layperson's textbook on colon health. Including how-to's, as well as a complete glossary of terms and index of professional referrals.

Colon Irrigation: A Forgotten Key to Health. Baker, Mark. St. Louis, MO: Mark Baker, 1989.

A helpful booklet, in easy-to-understand terms, about "autointoxification" and the role of colon irrigation in restoring vital health. This booklet can be ordered from the author for three dollars by writing to: Mark Baker, 11558 Saint Charles Rock Road, Bridgeton, Missouri 63044

A Doctor's Guide to You and Your Colon. Plaut, Martin. New York: Harper & Row, 1986.

An authoritative, easy-to-understand guide covering a variety of colon difficulties and treatments.

Tissue Cleansing through Bowel Management. Jensen, Bernard. Escondido, CA: Bernard Jensen, 1981.

A comprehensive look at detoxifying, cleansing, and maintaining better health through bowel management.