

DIET AND NUTRITION

A number of people with MS have found that by having a restricted diet, they can manage some of their MS symptoms. There are several diets that claim to help with the symptoms of MS. The two main ones are The Best Bet Diet and The Swank Diet.

Ashton Embry's Best Bet Diet (BBD)

Ashton Embry has based his diet on the theory that an autoimmunity process is ignited by undigested food proteins escaping through the gut wall and into the circulatory system. This causes the immune system to attack the 'invaders'. This process is known as Leaky Gut Syndrome.

Ashton Embry believes that the molecular structure of parts of the protein of certain foods is very similar to parts of the proteins in myelin. The immune system cannot tell the difference between these 'invaders' and its own cells and so attacks the myelin as well as the invaders.

The Best Bet Diet

Stop, or at least restrict, the consumption of foods whose molecular structure is so similar to the myelin that it is possible that it could ignite the autoimmunity process. These 'suspect' foods are:

- **Dairy** – Avoid all animal milks and all butters, cheeses and yoghurts made from animal milks and all products that contain them. A suitable alternative is rice milk or low fat coconut milk.
- **Gluten** – Avoid all wheat, rye and barley and all products containing them. It is advised that oats are also avoided. These can be replaced by rice, corn, quinoa and gluten-free flours and grains.
- **Legumes** – Avoid all beans, peas and pulses, especially soya, and all products containing them. All other vegetables are allowed.
- **Refined Sugar** – avoid where possible as this can make leaky gut worse and can also affect the immune system. More acceptable alternative sweeteners are honey, maple syrup, fruit sugar (fructose) and stevia.

As an additional precaution, it is suggested that an ELISA blood test is carried out (further details below) to identify which foods have escaped across the leaky gut (if any) in the past. There may be a hypersensitivity issue which is contributing to the leaky gut syndrome.

The Best Bet Diet also recommends taking a number of supplements (some of which are detailed below).

For more information about the Best Bet Diet, please visit our website – www.msrc.co.uk

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The Swank Diet

Another diet which people with MS have found beneficial is the Swank Diet. Dr Roy Swank began his research over 60 years ago. Below are the basic principles of the Swank diet:

Swank Quick Reference guide

- Eat no more than 15g of Saturated fat a day
- Have between 20-50g of unsaturated fat per day
- Eat no red meat whatsoever for the first year on the diet
- After the first year, eat no more than 3oz (85g) of red meat per week
- Avoid dairy products which contain more 1% butterfat
- Avoid processed foods which contain saturated fat
- It is recommended you take 1 tablespoon (or capsule equivalent) of Cod Liver Oil and a multivitamin & mineral supplement daily

For more information about the Swank diet, please visit our website. Alternatively you could visit the Swank diet website - www.swankmsdiet.org

Please note this list is not exhaustive and these are not the only diets those with MS have found beneficial, however these are the main diets specifically designed with MS in mind.

Leaky Gut Syndrome

What is Leaky Gut?

A leaky gut is when the lining of the intestine becomes permeable like a sieve. This allows partly digested food to pass through and into the bloodstream. It also means that nutrients are not absorbed properly.

Typical symptoms of leaky gut include:

- Fatigue
- Muscle Ache
- Abdominal pain
- Raised temperature
- General malaise
- Food Allergies
- Candida
- Poor exercise tolerance

How do you test for Leaky Gut?

The standard test for leaky gut is the mannitol and lactulose test. Both of these substances are not used by the body. Mannitol is easily absorbed by someone with a healthy gut. Lactulose is only slightly absorbed. The test involves drinking a solution containing both these substances and then having a urine test 6 hours later. The amount of each substance in the urine is measured. If high levels of both mannitol and lactulose are detected then this indicates a leaky gut condition.

What causes Leaky Gut?

Leaky gut could be caused by a number of things including Candida, nutritional deficiencies, refined sugar, stress, trauma, alcohol or tobacco.

How do you treat Leaky Gut?

You can take supplements such as:

- Glutamine - the main fuel for cells of the intestine and promotes healing of the gut lining.
- Probiotics, for example Lactobacillus bifidus – friendly bacteria which counteract the bad bacteria or Candida and boost the immune system.
- Antioxidants – e.g. Proanthocyanidins from grape seeds, Pycnogenal from pine bark, Vitamin C, Vitamin E
- Gingko Bilboa
- Zinc
- Cats Claw
- Slippery Elm

Candida

What is Candida?

Candida is a fungal overgrowth of the gut, where the natural fungus of the gut gets out of control and overloads the immune system. In Candida, the normal yeast has changed into a parasitic fungus which penetrates the bowel, causing little holes which in turn causes leaky gut syndrome.

Typical symptoms of Candida include:

- General malaise
- Low energy
- Bloating and heavy gut

What causes Candida?

Candida can be caused by the over-use of antibiotics, the contraceptive pill, long term use of steroids and some other drugs which can destroy the healthy gut bacteria. Yeasts, parasites and bacteria may also be a trigger.

How do you test for Candida?

A simple home testing kit is available to test for Candida. (See ELISA tests below)

How is Candida treated?

To treat Candida, the fungal overgrowth needs to be controlled and the balance of healthy bacteria in the gut restored. As Candida feeds on things which are sweet, fungal and fermented, a change in diet can help.

The Anti-Candida Diet

Avoid:

- Yeast, Bread & Pastries
- All fermented products
- Alcohol
- Sugar
- White Flour
- Citrus fruit juices
- Milk
- Processed and Smoked Meats and Fish
- Dried and Candied Fruits

- Melons, Ripe Bananas and Grapes
- Mushrooms and all fungi
- Cheese
- Drugs which promote the growth of yeast e.g. steroid, antibiotics, the contraceptive pill
- Coffee and Tea

Other ways to treat Candida include grapefruit seed extract, Camomile, Redbush tea and Oxygen Therapy

ELISA Testing

An ELISA test is a blood test for food intolerances. MSRC currently offer two options for ELISA tests – Cambridge Nutritional Sciences & York Labs. Both are available worldwide. They are home tests and there is no need to visit a doctor to have a sample taken or to have the results analysed. A special kit will be sent to your home, from the lab, and all that is needed is a thumb prick to release enough blood to soak a small swab.

The test results will show if you are intolerant to 113-120 foods (depending on which option you chose) and to which degree you are intolerant.

Cambridge Nutritional Sciences also offer a Candida Albicans test which can be done at the same time as the Elisa test.

ELISA testing is also available for vegetarians and Vegans are a reduced rate.

For more information about these tests please contact the MSRC office.

Supplements

There are a number of supplements which have been found to be beneficial. The most common are listed below, however for a more comprehensive list, please visit our website.

Vitamin D

Some research suggests that there is a link between MS and Vitamin D deficiency. It is important Vitamin D3 is taken and not D2. This is because D3 is the natural form and not a synthetic supplement. It is recommended that a daily Vitamin D3 supplement of 5000IU is taken. However, exposure to ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation in sunlight is the most effective way to boost Vitamin D supply and as little as 15 minutes in the sun a day will increase Vitamin D levels without increasing the risk of cancer. Below is an extract from a recent consensus statement released by a number of societies including Cancer Research UK:

"This consensus statement represents the unified views of the British Association of Dermatologists, Cancer Research UK, Diabetes UK, the Multiple Sclerosis Society, the National Heart Forum, the National Osteoporosis Society and the Primary Care Dermatology Society. Vitamin D is essential for good bone health and for most people sunlight is the most important source of Vitamin D. The time required to make sufficient Vitamin D varies according to a number of environmental, physical and personal factors, but is typically short and less than the amount of time needed for skin to redden and burn. Enjoying the sun safely, while taking care not to burn, can help to provide the benefits of Vitamin D without unduly raising the risk of skin cancer. Vitamin D supplements and specific foods can help to maintain sufficient levels of Vitamin D, particularly in people at risk of deficiency. However, there is still a lot of uncertainty around what levels qualify as "optimal" or "sufficient", how much sunlight different people need to

achieve a given level of Vitamin D, whether Vitamin D protects against chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes, and the benefits and risks of widespread supplementation.”

Calcium and Magnesium

These minerals are both essential to the normal function of muscles, not only in muscle contraction but also in maintaining an appropriate level of muscle tone during periods of relaxation. The occurrence of muscle cramp, due to spasm, is well known to be associated with calcium deficiency. The recommended daily dose is at least 1000mg of Calcium and 500mg of magnesium.

Omega 3 & 6

Omega 3 and Omega 6 are essential fatty acids. Omega 3 is needed for the normal function of the nervous system and the production of myelin. Omega 6 helps to regulate the immune system and has anti-viral properties. These essential fatty acids can be found in the following supplements:

- Fish Oil Supplements (e.g. cod liver oil) - High in Omega 3
- Evening Primrose Oil or Starflower Oil – Both are high in Omega 6
- Flax Seed Oil or Hemp Seed Oil – both contain a good balance of both Omega 3 and Omega 6

B Vitamins

The B Vitamins are needed for the normal functioning of the nerves and brain and for the repair and maintenance of tissue. Vitamin B12 in particular is needed for a healthy myelin sheath, nervous system and bone marrow. A deficiency of Vitamin B12 can adversely affect the processes of the immune system. It is recommended that 100mg of Vitamin B complex and 1mg of Vitamin B12 is taken to ensure optimum levels of these important vitamins.