



Fact Sheet

Gut Health; Side Effects of Prescribed Medication; The value of Herbal Teas

Let's start with gut health- this is a whole workshop in itself, so I'll be brief.



Why It Matters:

A healthy intestinal barrier keeps unwanted toxins from entering the bloodstream, this reduces chronic inflammation which can impair healing elsewhere in the body.

Good microbes nourish cells and boost our immune system, which is essential for recovery. 70-80% of the body's immune system is associated with the gut.

The gut communicates with the central nervous system and releases serotonin, which positively affects our mood and reduces stress.

The gut is a regenerative organ: its lining renews itself frequently, which if looked after, can speed up repair following injury.



However:

The gut microbiome (bacteria that naturally inhabits our bodies), is highly sensitive to external influences: antibiotics and other medication, poor diet, sleep deprivation, stress, etc. These can shift the balance of healthy microbes and slow down the healing process.

Side Effects of Prescribed Medication:



Naproxen: Anti-inflammatory: 500g twice daily (my prescription)

This reduces inflammation and pain by inhibiting enzymes called cyclooxygenases (COX-1 & COX-2), which also help to protect the stomach lining, kidney function, and blood clotting. Therefore, by inhibiting these productive enzymes, it is possible that the stomach lining, kidneys and blood clotting ability can be affected.

Note: Risks are increased by taking higher doses, over a longer period of time and as you get older. Also, if you have pre-existing conditions such as kidney disease, heart disease or stomach ulcers

They should also be used with caution if you have weak bones (I have recently found out that I have).

**Common side Effects:**

- Headaches
- Tinnitus (I already had this)
- Dizziness, sleepiness
- Blurred vision
- Rashes or itching
- Gastrointestinal discomfort e.g. heartburn, nausea, indigestion, constipation, diarrhoea, flatulence

I suffered severe heartburn and acid reflux and drowsiness

Diazepam: ½ tablet three times daily: Benzodiazepine: Sedative

Benzodiazepines work by enhancing the effect of GABA, which is the brain's main inhibitory neurotransmitter. This makes neurons less likely to fire and produces a calming effect, which is why it's used to treat anxiety and seizures. It is also a sedative, and muscle-relaxant, which is why it was prescribed for me- because at the time, it was thought I had soft tissue damage, and this would reduce the chance of muscle spasms. They are fast-acting, but only intended for short-term use (2-4 weeks), due to the risk of dependency and withdrawal symptoms.

Common Side Effects:

- Drowsiness or feeling sleepy and sedated
- Tiredness / fatigue
- Dizziness, unsteadiness / problems with coordination
- Shaky hands / tremors
- Feeling less alert
- Memory impairment

They certainly made me drowsy, tired and less alert.

Omeprazole: Once daily: Proton Pump Inhibitor (PPI).

This works by inhibiting the H⁺/K⁺ ATPase pump in the stomach lining, which is responsible for secreting gastric acid into the stomach. It blocks this pump and reduces acid production. This is often prescribed to treat stomach ulcers and acid



reflux, so is often given to counteract the side effects on the stomach of other medication.

Common Side Effects:

- Headaches
- Stomach pain or discomfort
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation or flatulence

I had none of those thankfully. BUT, I have never seen the point (unless it's life threatening and there is no other no option), of being prescribed one medication to counteract another??

Surely, it's best to treat side effects naturally and only take medication if absolutely necessary? I understand that in my case, for the first few days, I was in severe pain, so I was prescribed meds that were fast acting and short term. However, this is not always the case, and there are many occasions where Omeprazole is given for longer term use.

Which leads nicely onto natural products.

Herbal Teas:



Now this is another workshop in itself, there are so many of them, and you can also make your own blends, which I quite often do!!



For this purpose, I am only mentioning teas here, that are considered beneficial to aid digestion, are anti-inflammatory, or boost the immune system (as this is what I needed), but there are many, many more benefits, when you look at the whole range.

My favourites:

- Fennel: useful for indigestion, restores gut health, soothing to the stomach and rich in anti-toxins.
- Lemon & Ginger: soothing to the stomach, anti-inflammatory, boosts the immune system.
- Peppermint: aids digestion and soothing to the stomach.

Now of course you will need to drink these often over time to get the full effect, but they definitely work! In my 30's I had a lot of stress; final exams, bereavement and divorce all at the same time, and I really bad acid reflux. I couldn't eat fried foods or drink red wine and life was miserable. I was prescribed omeprazole, and took this regularly until I discovered herbal teas: I've never looked back! One in the morning and one in the afternoon and since then, I've never had the need to take anti acid medication

There are so many flavours and makes, that you are bound to find one you like. They are also so versatile! You can have them hot, or as an iced tea, they are low in calories, caffeine free, and they keep you hydrated. If you make your own, they are also free!

Top Tip:

Do not throw away herbs, ends of lemons, bits of ginger, or any other bits and pieces you may have left over. Make a tea! There are loads of recipes online. You can also use what you have in the garden- nettle and dandelion teas are great too, but follow a recommended source as there are contraindications with some ingredients for certain conditions.

Note:

The information contained in this fact sheet relates to my prescription and what I found useful only. Everyone is unique, and you will find your own way of doing things, and stick with what works for you.

Check in with your own intuition- does this feel right for you?

Follow your 'gut' instinct, and you won't go wrong.

References/ Useful resources

Guts UK (Charity)

NHS – Digestive Health / Eat Well / Good Foods to Help Digestion

The Gut Microbiome: Exploring the Connection between Microbes, Diet, and Health by
Ana Maria R. Moise

Love your gut: Megan Rossi

Hollandandbarrett.com

<https://www.heathandheather.co.uk/>

20, 000 Secrets of Tea: The Most Effective Ways to Benefit from Nature's Healing Herbs:
Victoria Zak

