



# Gut feeling

With the growing trend for inside-out aesthetics, we examine the importance of gut health within the clinic environment

**W**ellness was one of the biggest trends in 2018 and with regenerative medicine and a move towards taking a 360-degree approach to rejuvenation, aesthetic clinics are expanding the scope of their practice into this arena.

The inside-out approach means not just addressing the external problems your clients have, but also looking at the root causes and addressing them in order to enhance outcomes.

Medical practitioners are well-placed to put their clinical skills to use here by incorporating different aspects of medicine into their offerings to enhance their clinic's services. From aesthetic gynecology to bioidentical hormones, aesthetics is no longer about filling lines and wrinkles. And there is one area in particular that is gaining traction – gut health.

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chemical toxins, stress, and alcohol.<sup>1</sup> In other words, modern living is a catastrophe for our gut health.

Our digestive tracts contain trillions of bacteria. It is estimated that this number is about 40 trillion – that's 10 trillion more bacteria than there are human cells.<sup>2</sup> Bacteria along with fungi and viruses are known as the microbiome and the link between our gut microbiome and our health is only just beginning to be understood on a deeper level.

The human gut microbiome is a combination of a functional human organ and microbial communities of remarkable size, diversity, and complexity. With the advent of rapid, culture-independent surveys of microbiomes, and the relative ease with which these can be conducted in patient populations, a host of microbiome-disease associations has emerged, with gut health now linked to everything from depression and anxiety to cancer and skin disorders.

As such we are now starting to think of the gut almost like our second brain, an organ capable of telling us much more about what is going on with our health and our bodies than we previously thought

## THE RISE OF THE UNHEALTHY GUT

Modern living is taking its toll on our gut health, with studies suggesting that most people born after 1950 will have a disturbed microbiome due to overuse of gut depleting antibiotics, hormones, medicines, processed foods, sugars,

## THE GUT MICROBIOME AND HUMAN HEALTH

Correlations are now evident between many disease processes and patterns of microbiome dysbiosis in both gut dysfunction and extra-intestinal disorders, such as:

- IBS, IBD and Clostridium difficile colitis
- Cardiometabolic disease
- A variety of malignancies, including colorectal, head and neck, pancreatic, and lung cancers
- Immune-Mediated Inflammatory Diseases (IMIDs), including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, and multiple sclerosis
- Psychiatric disorders, such as major depression and anxiety
- Neurobehavioral disorders including autism, anorexia nervosa, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Skin conditions, particularly those with substantial inflammatory components, such as psoriasis, atopic dermatitis (eczema), and rosacea.

Source: Genova Diagnostics

## THE GUT AND SKIN

Dermatologists John Stokes and Donald Pillsbury first established the relationship between gut flora and healthy skin, as well as depression and anxiety, more than 70 years ago, after they began to notice gut flora was altered in people with severe acne.

Gut health is particularly linked to skin conditions with substantial inflammatory components, such as psoriasis, atopic dermatitis (eczema) and rosacea.

But why is this? The answers apparently lie in the balance of good and bad bacteria in the gut flora, a complex >



## GENOVA DIAGNOSTICS' GI EFFECTS® COMPREHENSIVE STOOL PROFILE



I've been working close with nutritionist Kim Pearson for the past 18 months. She has helped me to lose weight and change my diet, and I've been feeling a lot better for it. However, I was still suffering with various gut-related issues and acne flare ups, so Kim suggested we do the GI Effects Comprehensive Stool Profile from Genova Diagnostics to give her a better idea of what was going on inside me to help address these problems.

Kim uses the lab for her clients because it is a highly advanced stool test that provides actionable clinical information for the management of gut health.

The test was sent to me and I collected stool samples over three days. It was actually a lot easier than I imagined and the accompanying instructions were very clear and easy for a layman like me to follow. Once I'd completed the final sample, I called the lab's appointed courier and the samples were picked up the same day.

A couple of weeks later, the results were sent to Kim as my overseeing practitioner and we sat down together to go through the report, which was incredibly comprehensive.

The tests utilise cutting-edge technologies and premier biomarkers to examine a variety of different markers, giving a valuable insight into digestive function, gut inflammation, and the gut microbiome – areas affecting not only GI health, but overall health as well.

It gave Kim and I a very clear idea as to what was going on inside my gut, clarity I'd not had during discussions with my GP about my symptoms, which included painful cramps,

inconsistent bowel movements, bloating, and problems with eating and digesting certain foods.

The report showed I had very low levels of certain strains of beneficial (good) bacteria at the same time as having presence of pathogenic (bad) bacteria, elevated inflammatory markers and the presence of fecal fat. They also found two different strains of candida.

Kim said that, given the results, it was no wonder I was struggling but that there were actionable steps we could take to address what was found. She also said that I would need to work alongside a doctor as well as her to address the problems as some would require medical input. This was a huge relief. I've struggled for years with my gut and knowing that it was all fixable with the right help was great news. It was also amazing to finally have a clear picture of what was going on. I know my own body and I knew something wasn't right, but because I wasn't diagnosed with a disease (thankfully) or even something such as IBS, my GP had been dismissive. Having the tests done has given Kim and I something to work with. She now knows which probiotics would be most beneficial to me rather than recommending them blind, and this allows for a much more targeted approach to treatment. I'd highly recommend getting patients to have these tests done if you suspect there are underlying gut health issues.



community of microorganisms that live in the digestive tract, and the hundreds of millions of neurons in the stomach's lining that communicate with the brain and play an important role in the immune system. If we're not getting enough good bacteria to fight off the bad, the microbial load becomes imbalanced and creates inflammation in the body.

Many of the usual suspects are to blame for compromising gut flora: sugar, heavy carbs, caffeine, alcohol, and processed foods. High stress levels and a lack of sleep can also throw the body off whack by affecting the microbial load thanks to altered levels of the stress hormone cortisol, weakening the body's anti-inflammatory response.

As the largest organ in the body the skin acts as a mirror to what is going on elsewhere, so it makes sense that the presence of inflammatory skin conditions could be a red light warning of wider issues in the body.

We are beginning to realise that products and treatments alone cannot support the skin holistically and, as such, many clinics now advise on dietary and lifestyle changes that may support good skin health. However, gut testing allows us to go one step further in our diagnosis.

### UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

An easy way to incorporate gut testing or profiling into your clinic is to partner with a lab. Nutritionist Kim Pearson, who is passionate about gut health, works with Genova Diagnostics, a diagnostic testing lab for wellness and preventative medicine. The company sends out kits directly to the client, allowing them to carry out the tests in the comfort of their home. The results are then sent to the client's practitioner.

A wide of variety of tests are available, ensuring practitioners can develop targeted treatments for their patients. The easy-to-read colour graphic reports synthesise test results into actionable information and facilitate practitioner-patient communication. **AM**

### REFERENCES

- 1 Dr Johanna Ward, Skin and Nutrition, Aesthetic Medicine, June 2018
- 2 Sender R, Fuch S, Milo R. Revised Estimates for the Number of Human and Bacteria Cells in the Body. PLoSBiol. 2016 Aug; 14(8): e1002533.