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Antibiotics Linked to Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Analysis by Dr. Joseph Mercola ✔ Fact Checked

June 01, 2022

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- People over 60 who have used antibiotics may be at increased risk of developing inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)
- Use of antibiotics was associated with a 64% increased risk of developing IBD, and the risk increased with additional doses
- Compared with those who had taken no antibiotics in the previous five years, risk of IBD in those who received five or more antibiotics prescriptions increased by 236%
- All classes of antibiotics were associated with increased IBD risk, but fluoroquinolones had the most notable association
- Antibiotics have also been linked to an increased risk of bowel cancer, heart attack and stroke

People over 60 who have used antibiotics may be at increased risk of developing inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), a condition characterized by chronic inflammation of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract.[1] The finding, which was presented at the Digestive Disease Week conference held in San Diego, California, in May 2022, may explain the rising rates of IBD occurring among older adults.

"It's quite important to really understand what's driving this," lead study author Dr. Adam Faye, of New York University Langone School of Medicine, said in a news release. "There's clearly something in the environment that's driving this new onset of older-onset IBD."

An estimated 3 million (or 1.3%) of U.S. adults suffer from IBD, which includes Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.[2] A CDC study revealed that from 2001 to 2018, the prevalence of IBD among 25.1 million Medicare beneficiaries aged 67 years or older increased among all racial/ethnic groups.[3]

Environmental factors are a likely culprit, with the CDC researchers finding that living in urban areas was associated with an increased risk of IBD. As such they stated that factors that influence the microbiome, such as pollution, diet and lifestyle, could be involved.[4]

Antibiotics also have a significant effect on the microbiome and represent another environmental factor that may be driving up IBD rates in older adults. Faye said:[5]

> *"In older adults, we think that environmental factors are more important than genetics. When you look at younger patients with new diagnoses of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, there's generally a strong family history. But that is not the case in older adults, so it's really something in the environment that is triggering it."*

IBD Risk Increases by 64% With Antibiotics Use

Faye and colleagues analyzed records from more than 2.3 million adults aged 65 to 90 who were part of the Danish National Patient Register and the Danish National Prescription Register from 2000 to 2018. Patients newly diagnosed with IBD were identified and compared with antibiotic use.

Use of antibiotics was associated with a 64% increased risk of developing IBD, and the risk increased with additional doses.[6] Compared with those who had taken no antibiotics in the previous five years:[7]

- One prescription for antibiotics was associated with a 27% increased risk of IBD
- Two prescriptions increased risk by 55%
- Three prescriptions increased risk by 67%
- Four prescriptions increased risk by 96%
- Five or more prescriptions increased risk by 236%

Adults who had been prescribed antibiotics one to two years prior to IBD diagnosis had the highest risk, but those who took the drugs two to five years prior also had an elevated risk. All classes of antibiotics were associated with increased IBD risk, though fluoroquinolones, which include brand names Cipro and Levaquin, had the most notable association.[8]

This is the same class of drugs that may harm your heart by causing an increased risk of ruptures or tears in the aorta blood vessel. The aorta is the main artery in your body supplying oxygenated blood to your circulatory system.

In December 2018, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warned that fluoroquinolones taken by mouth or via injection could lead to these aortic dissections or ruptures of an aortic aneurysm that could lead to serious bleeding or death.[9] The risks of these and other antibiotics must be carefully weighed against the benefits prior to use.

"We think of antibiotic stewardship not only to prevent the development of multidrug-resistant organisms, but in this case now we should be thinking about it to prevent the development of inflammatory bowel disease," Faye said,[10] pointing out that antibiotics' disruption to the gut microbiome could be contributing to the development of IBD.

Maybe there's something in the microbiome that antibiotics are doing that's priming an individual to then later develop inflammatory bowel disease, and this really needs to be looked at further," he said.[11]

Antibiotics Linked to Bowel Cancer

While antibiotics can be lifesaving, at least 30% of outpatient antibiotic prescriptions are unnecessary, according to CDC estimates.[12] Taking antibiotics when unnecessary exposes you to increased risk for no benefit, and the risks include serious disease aside from IBD — even cancer.

In 2014, researchers linked antibiotics use to a slightly increased risk (8% to 11%) of developing colorectal cancer, also known as bowel cancer, possibly because of alterations to the gut microbiome.[13] Likewise, past research has also shown that people with less bacterial diversity in their gastrointestinal tracts are more likely to develop colon cancer.[14]

Separate research found that women who had used antibiotics for two months or more were at an increased risk of developing colon polyps, which can be a precursor to colorectal cancer.[15] Those who used the drugs for a total of at least two months in their 20s and 30s had a 36% increased risk of polyps compared to those who did not.

Even taking antibiotics for 15 days or more, at any age range, was associated with an increased risk of polyps. In 2016, another study also found increasing use of antibiotics was associated with an increasing risk of colorectal cancer, especially when used frequently.[16]

Antibiotics May Increase Risk of Stroke, Heart Attack

Even one course of antibiotics negatively alters your microbiome for up to a year,[17] which is precisely why it's crucial to only use antibiotics when absolutely necessary. When used for longer periods, they also can cause considerable damage, including to your heart.

A study published in the European Heart Journal found that women aged 60 and older who used antibiotics for two months or longer — often for respiratory infections, urinary tract infections and dental problems — were 32% more likely to develop cardiovascular disease than women who did not use such drugs.[18]

Overall, among women in late adulthood who take antibiotics for two months or more, 6 per 1,000 would develop cardiovascular disease, compared to 3 per 1,000 for women who did not. Women in middle age (40 to 59 years) who used antibiotics for longer then two months also had a 28% increased risk of cardiovascular disease. Again, alterations in gut microbiota were highlighted as playing a detrimental part in antibiotics' adverse effects to the heart.

"Antibiotic use is the most critical factor in altering the balance of microorganisms in the gut. Previous studies have shown a link between alterations in the microbiotic environment of the gut and inflammation and narrowing of the blood vessels, stroke and heart disease," study author Lu Qi, director of the Tulane University Obesity Research Center in New Orleans, stated in a news release.[19]

Taking antibiotics for at least two months also increases the risk of death from all causes by 27% among women in late adulthood, compared to women who did not take the drugs.[20] The women taking long-term antibiotics also had a 58% higher risk of death due to heart problems.

Millions Suffer From Antibiotic-Resistant Infections

Due to the widespread misuse and overuse of antibiotics — including by industrial agriculture for purposes of growth promotion[21] and preventing diseases in animals — many types of bacteria have developed resistance to antibiotics. As a result, more than 2.8 million antibiotic-resistant infections occur in the U.S. annually, with more than 35,000 people dying as a result.[22]

When Clostridioides difficile infections, which are associated with antibiotics use, are added in to these figures, more than 3 million infections and 48,000 deaths attributed to antibiotics use or antibiotic-resistant infections occur every year in the U.S.

This public health emergency underscores the fact that when you take antibiotics, there are both short- and long-term risks, the latter of which, such as antibiotic-resistant infections or IBD, may not become evident until long after you've stopped taking the drugs.

Natural Options for IBD

If you must take antibiotics, add more traditionally fermented and cultured foods to your diet to optimize your gut flora, and consider the use of spore-based probiotics, or sporebiotics, which are part of a group of derivatives of the microbe called Bacillus, have been shown to dramatically increase your immune tolerance.

I also recommend taking the beneficial yeast Saccharomyces boulardii prior and during antibiotic treatment to prevent secondary complications of antibiotic treatment, such as diarrhea. If you've been diagnosed with ulcerative colitis, one of the forms of IBD, be aware that natural treatment options may help.

Ulcerative colitis symptoms range from mild to severe, and while most people have periods of remission when symptoms disappear, it can be debilitating when symptoms flare up, causing frequent, urgent bowel movements, fatigue, nausea, weight loss, fever and anemia. In about 10% of cases, ulcerative colitis is severe and may lead to bloody bowel movements and severe abdominal cramping.[23]

Up to one-third of patients even undergo surgery to remove the colon and rectum,[24] but ginger, which has a range of biological activities, including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and cytotoxic (potential anti-carcinogenic) effects,[25] has been shown to reduce disease activity in this condition.[26]

In one study, ginger was found to reduce malondialdehyde (MDA), a biomarker of oxidative stress, in patients with ulcerative colitis significantly after six and 12 weeks. Ginger also led to reductions in severity of disease activity and increased patients' quality of life significantly after 12 weeks.[27]

IBD can be challenging to treat, so work with a knowledgeable natural health care practitioner who can develop a comprehensive treatment protocol. However, in addition to ginger the following natural options may also provide some relief:

- Probiotics — People with inflammatory conditions such as ulcerative colitis who took the probiotic bacteria Bifidobacterium infantis for eight weeks had lower levels of inflammation than those taking a placebo.[28]
- Curcumin — The turmeric compound curcumin may help to induce and maintain remission in ulcerative colitis patients without serious side effects.[29]
- Omega-3 fats — The animal-based omega-3 fats in krill oil, EPA and DHA, have immune-boosting qualities along with anti-inflammatory properties proven to benefit disorders of the gut, including ulcerative colitis.[30]
- Optimizing vitamin D levels — In vitamin-D-deficient patients with ulcerative colitis, vitamin D supplementation was associated with reduced intestinal inflammation in one study.[31]

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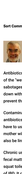

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by Doctor Joseph Mercola

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jai108
Joined 04/13/2009 11:41:06 AM
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Antibiotics are surely responsible for the rise in IBD incidence, but they are not the underlying cause. Crohn's and colitis are diseases of the 'western world' because of poor colon hygiene. Humans were designed to squat for bodily functions and the western toilet sabotages the natural biomechanics of defecation. They force one to use the valsalva maneuver (holding your breath and pushing down with the diaphragm.) This pushes fecal matter backwards into the small intestine. The ileocecal (IC) valve was designed to prevent this backward, but it only functions properly when squatted by the thighs when you're squatting.

Contamination of the small intestine leads to inflammation, called "Crohn's Disease." Conventional treatment is usually MORE antibiotics, as well as surgery (removal of the IC valve and the surrounding inflamed parts of the intestine.) Even infants in diapers have to use the valsalva maneuver because they are not allowed trained to squat. By contrast, in rural parts of the developing world, a mother will hold her baby by the thighs, allowing him to do an "air-squat" over the toilet, or outside the house. Ulcerative colitis can also be linked to the abandonment of squat toilets.

Chronic use of an ineffective and unnatural method of defecation leads to fecal retention in the cecum and sigmoid colon. Stagnant fecal matter becomes a breeding ground for inflammatory bacteria to colonize the colon (dysbiosis.) Therefore, the abandonment of squat toilets, which is rapidly occurring throughout the developing world, is the demographic change that is responsible for the spread of IBD. It could easily be reversed, once the population becomes aware of its terrible consequences. Much more information about this hypothesis can be found at https://naturesplatform.com/.

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Brenda73
Joined 04/11/2015 8:57:41 AM
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Thank you for the info!

Mark as Spam Posted On : 6/2/2022 6:41:38 AM
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steelj
Joined 04/19/2006 11:43:25 PM
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Is there anyone in a first world country over 60 who has NOT used antibiotics? We avoid them, but just in the last 20 years I've had the root canals, infected tooth, and an infected big toe. Sure we avoid them, but they're minute drops in such cases. Dosy made the lyme rash disappear in a day BTW - like magic.

Reply Mark as Spam Posted On : 6/1/2022 11:05:57 AM
Like Dislike

cawa
Joined 04/13/2009 12:42:21 PM
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Dosy made me unable to raise my left arm after 3 days and did another number on my stomach. I cured my Lyme & Babesia with Stephen Buhner Herbal protocol (3 books on all tick diseases on Amazon) and thousands cured. He was already established lyme so it took 9 months of consistent 24 daily protocol, but I have very high quality microscopic evidence that it worked. If you top the tractors in bulldize bottles instead of 1 oz) from woodland essence dot com it runs about $25b a month. On the other hand my entire alimentary tract is wracked with fluoroquinolones and dozens of other antibiotics - most of which would never have been necessary if not for the incompetence and lies of the dietal profession that have nearly killed me several times.

Mark as Spam Posted On : 6/3/2022 8:24:32 AM
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forbiddenhealing
Joined 04/25/2011 8:51:42 AM
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Just as "You' not a critical to plant health, so the symbiotic relationship a the pesspmen in our gut and ALL health issues..plancy/somatic "Karma" w/o this secondary value-added digestion....Restoring your dead garden soil with compostc is easier than repairing a damaged biome...Takes a multi-pronged approach...I would start from zero...1st, repair intestinal linings a lots of VV and collagen rich broths....2nd, reduce staph/strep/candida/etc. w a few weeks of oregano oil...3rd, overload the system with large populations of as many strains of beneficials as possible via enteric coated caps, dirt probiotics, ferments, yogurts and feed them with resistant starches/prebiotics and yeast heavy sugar use and all the Mbers of your best friends. Fasting helps....I have had good results with yogurt cultures after a bg. Dr. Davis "Super Gut" and began making yogurt cultures...

#AbsentWhitePeople#Fb.com/...//make-it-better-yogurt The idea here is to out-populate pathogens and stop the production of endo toxins while reaping the benefits of all the extra nutrients gnbs made...the more strains the better and there are too many to count.

Reply Mark as Spam Posted On : 6/1/2022 7:58:41 AM
Like Dislike

rnealrose
Joined 04/17/2011 8:59:01 AM
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Seems Martin Blaser's book on "Missing Microbes" posits some strains of beneficial and commensal bacteria never return to the human gut, even as seemingly minor treatment with one single round of antibiotics. The resulting imbalance is not easily detectable, surely not playing Candyland.

Mark as Spam Posted On : 6/1/2022 11:01:37 AM
Like Dislike

MMaster
Joined 04/14/2021 1:37:23 AM

I had PDA for a patient who received three courses of antibiotics while in the hospital. Some time after discharge, he hemorrhaged from the bowels. I took him to the hospital. Guess what treatment they gave him. TWO MORE ANTIBIOTICS. The idiocy knows no bounds.

Reply Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/3/2022 1:01:07 AM

Like Dislike

cawa
Joined On 11/3/2009 12:42:21 PM
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You need to demand a fecal transplant. Only available in USA for clostridium difficile patients who have failed antibiotic treatment. Works even on the elderly 95% of the time yet it is the last resort they use! There are no amount of probiotic pills that can replace the die off from multiple rounds of antibiotics especially in those over 60 or if they have taken fluoroquinolones which alter the DNA of all bacteria cell's ability to replicate [including yours] . This can be accomplished by pharma glued "poop" pills from healthy highly screened donors, or implanting a slurry from an upper endoscopy or a colonoscopy.

The former requires no anesthesia but is hard to come by. IF YOU CAN FIND A HEALTHY DONOR [usually a spouse or relative] THAT IS NOT VACCINATED AND HAVENT HAD ANTIBIOTICS YOU CAN DO IT YOURSELF WITH ENEMAS. My whole digestive system is so bad for last 15 years of trying to fix it I am currently stalking home school moms with unvaccinated kids and offering to pay them for poop! My GP says it is criminal that USA will not allow doctors to help people like me.

Reply Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/3/2022 8:40:58 AM

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lucyricardo1
Joined On 3/10/2016 6:38:06 PM
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Ahh. The beauty of old age, when connecting a LOT more dots becomes almost effortless. If I were to zero in on the one thing that has compromised my health the most is ... TEETH or the lack thereof. The first line of digestion. Yup. Lots of stuff about the importance of oral health ... not enough press regarding the absence of molars. Dental costs are astronomical ... and so are the down stream effects of not having enough molars.

Reply Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/3/2022 1:41:15 PM

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nan5159
Joined On 6/3/2017 4:39:25 PM
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Of course it's better to avoid antibiotics as discussed here. That being said, they have saved my life on five occasions and I'm noticed they are one of the drugs not promoted. So my gut tells me there's more to treat these things that might respond to an antibiotic as chronic diseases "requiring" such meds as Humira for example. I've had low grade chronic things clear up immediately when I've gone on an antibiotic for a different definable infection and then gone on to feel great for a long time. It's like the thyroid issue. I have to ask to have my thyroid checked even though I have had thyroid issues in the past. Thyroid meds are cheap. But they're all on board to see if I have osteoporosis, even though I'm not at risk. But hey, maybe they can get me on Prolia.

Reply Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/1/2022 12:12:48 PM

Like Dislike

steelj
Joined On 6/19/2008 11:43:23 PM
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Yes, antibiotics aren't promoted because they work! You take them, they fix the problem (or don't) and you stop. That's also why they're not developed and there's a push to get the generic version to market. I've had low grade chronic things clear up immediately when I've gone on an antibiotic for a different definable infection and then gone on to feel great for a long time. It's like the thyroid issue. I have to ask to have my thyroid checked even though I have had thyroid issues in the past. Thyroid meds are cheap. But they're all on board to see if I have osteoporosis, even though I'm not at risk. But hey, maybe they can get me on Prolia.

Reply Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/1/2022 12:12:48 PM

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quinine
Joined On 6/19/2010 8:32:29 AM
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Another possible cause of Crohs and IBD is M. Avium Paratuberculosis or MAP. The pathology of the intestines in animals affected is pretty much identical to the pathology of Crohn's disease. MAP has been successfully cultured from pasteurized milk. It can live a for a long time in moist conditions and it is very hard to grow in culture. It takes years for MAP to show up in animals and the animal could have been shedding MAP for years before showing symptoms. I wish I had never heard of MAP. Johnn's but I found it in some of my goats and I have culled them from my herd.

I have a testing program in place and will continue to cull any animals from my herd that test positive. Most dairy herds in the US have MAP infected animals. Cows, sheep and goats when they get MAP symptoms, they can eat and eat and eat but lose weight and eventually die no matter how much you feed them. They don't lose their appetite either they just can't absorb nutrients from their digestive tract. www.Johnn's.org has a lot of good information if you are interested.

Reply Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/1/2022 9:06:53 AM

Like Dislike

MMaster
Joined On 6/14/2011 1:37:23 AM
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You might consider the possibility that ruminants lose weight because they develop parasitic in the jaw and can't chew the cud. This happened to one of my goat bucks. I gave him herbs that work on neurons, and he healed, and regained to a normal weight, lived for years after that.

Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/3/2022 1:13:49 AM

Like Dislike

quinine
Joined On 6/19/2010 8:32:29 AM
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to MMaster, you know, it would be awesome if someone could tell me about the herbs that would cure Johnn's disease. I looked for natural treatments, found one that said it keep the goat from eating for two weeks and give it enemas. So if you take an already sick thin goat and don't let it eat for two weeks, you will have.....a dead goat. When a goat is showing symptoms of Johnn's. Eating like crazy and not gaining weight, then jaw is not paralyzed. They eat and chew and eat and chew and continue to lose weight. And for anyone who thinks that I didn't check for parasites and deworm my goats; I did check for parasites it is part of my rotational grazing program to check for parasites.

When goats have Johnn's they will still have a bright pink conjunctive around the eye indicating no problems with worms or coccidia. But when you don't know what Johnn's is, and you try everything to treat your goats deworming, treating for coccidia, and you still have the problem and goats dying. you have to look for other diagnoses. I tested my herd. First with drawing blood and sending in samples to a lab that did a serum PCR test. Then I confirmed that those goats were positive with fecal PCR test.

And please let me add, I rarely have to deworm my goats because I am using a breed(KKN) that is fairly resistant and resilient to worms, and I use rotational grazing with a different species (cows and horses) following behind the goats to help keep parasites from causing a problem. I don't spray my fields, I don't use herbicides, I have let nature seed my fields which are very diverse. and I am glad you found some herbs that helped your goat and that your goat survived. Your goat did not have Johnn's.

Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/2/2022 8:17:25 AM

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pinkbaygelf
Joined On 10/11/2007 5:25:43 AM
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Dentists are the worst for prescribing unnecessary antibiotics. Prior to an implant, I was prescribed amoxicillin for 7 days! I ended up with colitis and a trip to urgent care where the doctor told me that it was caused by the antibiotic. She said she often sees it in infants and elderly people, but on my chart she wrote, "Cause unknown." Don't want to make big Pharma mad!

Reply Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/1/2022 8:17:52 AM

Like Dislike

bchristine
Joined On 7/1/2012 6:58:01 AM
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In MMaster, you know, it would be awesome if someone could tell me about the herbs that would cure Johnn's disease. I looked for natural treatments, found one that said it keep the goat from eating for two weeks and give it enemas. So if you take an already sick thin goat and don't let it eat for two weeks, you will have.....a dead goat. When a goat is showing symptoms of Johnn's. Eating like crazy and not gaining weight, then jaw is not paralyzed. They eat and chew and eat and chew and continue to lose weight. And for anyone who thinks that I didn't check for parasites and deworm my goats; I did check for parasites it is part of my rotational grazing program to check for parasites.

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Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/2/2022 8:17:25 AM

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Dr. Mercola
Joined On 12/21/1997 7:06:45 PM

This is easy. Use methylene blue as I discussed in my interview with Francisco Gonzalez Lima
tukecontrol.substack.com/...methylene-blue-health-benefits

Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/1/2022 7:29:13 AM

Like Dislike

lucyricardo1
Joined On 3/10/2016 6:38:06 PM
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Re: Chronic UTIs. One word. Shedding.

Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/3/2022 1:17:16 PM

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MMaster
Joined On 6/14/2011 1:37:23 AM
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Cranberry juice powder (bypasses the sugar) and d-Mannose. I healed UTIs at home more than once with unsweetened cranberry juice.

Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/3/2022 1:16:04 AM

Like Dislike

Joymarie76
Joined On 12/25/2007 12:55:05 PM
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The thing that works for me when I feel a UTI coming on is to begin taking some D-Mannose in water or mixed in a juice for several days. No antibiotics needed. It really works and fast! Works for several people I have told about it too. Thanks Dr. Mercola for introducing me to this great product!

Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/3/2022 5:38:14 AM

Like Dislike

Joymarie76
Joined On 12/25/2007 12:55:05 PM
Add as Friend Send Message

For UTIs, D-Mannose. Order on Amazon. It works! Ask Dr. Mercola!!!

Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/3/2022 5:41:31 AM

Like Dislike

resolnse
Joined On 11/10/2011 8:39:01 AM
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Killing fields are bacteria in the human gut! Trying to find time to follow Shivon Same, who has been blogging, interviewing and hosting online sessions about IBS, SIBO, SIFO and other gut conditions. Her book launched in the midst of pandemic 2021 and may have been overloaded by many. "Healing SIBO: Fix the Root Cause of IBS, Bloating, and Weight Issues in 21 Day" ,
www.amazon.com/Healing-SIBO-Bloating-Weight-Issues/dp/0593191773 — Shivon outlines a variety of gut issues which seem to be plaguing more Americans than ever before! Nevertheless, J&J (Janssen Dis.) removed Leesquin from the market in 2017 due to excessive numbers of consumer complaints, the FDA parked others off the market much earlier than that. Primarily CPRO was left on the market. Despite some warning signs, about 33% of all FDA-approved drugs on the market are fluoride-based, presenting a mine-field of dangers.

Reply Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/1/2022 6:31:58 AM

Like Dislike

jam5139
Joined On 11/5/2018 8:59:23 AM
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Thank you DrMercola and pinkbaygelf! I ordered some methylene blue from Tru-someone suggested, but is there anywhere else to get some? Someone here suggested a Powder form, which I think would be better for her, but I can't find it! Thanks again

Reply Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/3/2022 8:17:29 AM

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Almond
Joined On 2/26/2006 4:23:33 PM
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Guillermo... I have been watching for more than a few days now. Where are you? Hoping you have just taken a bit of time off for fishing and R&R.

Reply Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/3/2022 1:06:48 AM

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nancymat
Joined On 3/5/2015 5:32:29 AM
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Yes ... I've also been missing his lucid and informative comments!

Mark as Spam Posted On: 6/1/2022 5:05:12 AM

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Douglas_Copeland
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www.healthnatura.com

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