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### Steps to Clear Yeast from the Body

Guest: Donna Gates

*The purpose of this presentation is to convey information. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, or cure your condition or to be a substitute for advice from your physician or other healthcare professional.*

**Dr. Axe:** Welcome to the Heal Your Gut Summit! I am your host, Dr. Josh Axe. Today, I'll be interviewing one of my co-hosts and a very good friend of mine, Donna Gates. Donna is the international-bestselling author of *The Body Ecology Diet*. She's also done some unique things in her career. She's actually part of the Academy of Antiaging Medicine. She's also introduced stevia into the U.S., which I find incredible.

And she's also been just I believe a pioneer in bringing healing foods into America and really helping things like making young coconut kefir part of so many diets today. In fact, if you go to Whole Foods, you'll see it on the shelf. A big part of that is Donna's influence on so many health foods today. And so again, we're going to be talking about the importance of gut health, as well as overcoming candida.

Hey, Donna, welcome to your summit and mine, the Heal Your Gut Summit!

**Donna:** Thank you for that lovely introduction. That made me sound like a great person.

**Dr. Axe:** Well, you are a great person. I know that I've interviewed you before. And I always enjoy interviewing you because I feel like I always learn something new because you have such a rich history. And again being what I would consider to be one of the main pioneers of bringing a lot of gut-healing foods into the U.S. I mentioned stevia. I mentioned things like coconut kefir here.



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And obviously, if people go to your website, Body Ecology, they can find you online. I know before I met you, I was using your kefir starter. I would purchase, as well. And so again, you've done a lot for this entire gut health movement. I'm just honored to be hosting this summit with you.

But let's jump right in. You created the Body Ecology diet over 20 years ago to help people overcome an infection called candidiasis. Can you tell us what is candida? Why it's a problem? Really just get into some of the details about the diet someone needs to follow in order to overcome it.

**Donna:** Well, candidiasis is what a medical professional will call it. The rest of us just say candida. It's a much easier term to say I think. And it's an infection. It can be anywhere in the body. So a lot of people think it's just something that you get in your gut because maybe you've taken an antibiotic and you've destroyed the good guys down in the gut. And the yeasts are in there anyway. They're always present in the gut. Viruses, bacteria, and yeast in the gut, even a healthy gut.

But they're in a harmless form at first. But once they're left in this space without any bacteria around, they change form. And they become very pathogenic. They grow tentacles and they start to attach themselves to the mucosal lining. And they inflame it, cause that leaky gut we always hear about. They move through that barrier, get into the body, and then become systemic. So that's what many, many people have really is a systemic infection.

So that's what it is. It's a really dangerous infection. It's very poorly understood. That's the thing that's always amazed me. And, yes, I've been in it. Literally, over 20 years ago, I wrote *The Body Ecology Diet* to teach people how to overcome this infection. But I put the book out there, said a prayer. I said, "Please, take it anywhere, anyone that needs it anywhere in the world." And amazingly, it has sold hundreds of thousands of copies. It's made its way into many people's hands. And so we've gotten lots of feedback. But it helped



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everybody. And now, of course, many years later, I know why it does.

So you can do the right things, the things you need to do to have a healthy gut and so on. And you can overcome this infection just by doing the right things. Well, there is this term called an anti-candida diet. But actually what it must be is it must be sugar-free. You can't have any sugar because for sure that feeds the yeast or fungus. These are all interchangeable terms. And then, it needs to be gluten-free. And then you also need a casein-free diet initially.

Now, you mentioned the kefir. Years ago, when I started into all of this work, there were no fermented foods in the Country. Well, actually there was yogurt. Someone had brought yogurt over. But it wasn't popular yet because it was a hippy food basically. And it really was only in a few health food stores in California. But I began to understand the importance of having fermented foods. So I brought those in, too, into the world.

And so I did tell people about fermented dairy, especially kefir. But I knew though, because the gut is leaky and inflamed and you can't have dairy at that time. I always teach this. I've said this for years. And it's really important to understand is that all foods have a front and a back, a positive and a negative side to them.

And if you really truly want to understand foods and how to use them as medicine, you always have to look for the positive side of something and the negative side. And then you'll know right away, "Is this food appropriate for this person who has this condition right now?" So, no, in the beginning, a lot of people until they fix their gut, they can't have the casein in milk. So initially, the diet is sugar-free, gluten-free, and casein-free.

**Dr. Axe:** Great. Well, Donna, I know that you've got a lot of great products like your coconut kefir, which is amazing. Again, you're getting all of those good probiotics. It's sugar-free. It's casein-free. Obviously, I think a lot of things you've mentioned so far are things that tend to cause dampness in the body



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that can trigger allergies, food sensitivities, food intolerances. What about medications to that? I think one of the most common medical treatments today in treating candida is antifungal drugs and antibiotic drugs. Are those safe? And what do antifungals and antibiotics really do to the body? Do they make candida better or worse?

**Donna:** Well, if you have a sinus infection, most likely it's caused by fungus. And so you don't want an antibiotic because that's a drug that's been designed to kill bacteria. Now, an antifungal is where doctors automatically go. So as soon as they suspect that you have a fungal or yeast infection, as soon as they diagnose it, they will immediately put you on an antifungal drug like nystatin, Nizoral. Nystatin is probably considered the safest. But are they safe?

Well, one of the first things you need to know about them is that they don't really work. They will temporarily drive the infection back under control. But they're not curing it. That's why women have vaginal yeast infections month after month after month because they'll take something like Monistat, which used to be a prescription. The doctors got tired of getting calls all the time. So they just made it over the counter. But every month, a woman will get another vaginal yeast infection because it's not curing it. Same thing in the body. So they're not effective at all.

And then now we also know that...Well, one of the things I've said for the last couple of years about Body Ecology today, because we've evolved over all these many years, is that it's really a gut-smart and gene-smart diet. So for the last couple of years, I've been studying all about genes. It's a huge field. So you can spend the rest of your life studying it.

But one of the things that we know is that there are certain genetic variants like in SNP, ovarian, or polymorphism is a little gene that's not working right, or enzyme really, that's expressing proteins. And we have a bunch of those in the liver. And then all the drugs need to go through those. And so a doctor



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really isn't responsible to prescribe an antifungal drug unless he's checked each person's genes today.

And this is going to be the future of all medicine. Doctors will not be prescribing drugs until they've looked at a person's liver enzymes and checked their genes basically because there's a big class of drugs, antifungal drugs that millions of people, actually it's damaging them to take the antifungal drugs. And why? Why not do what we teach, which is diet, and actually get rid of the infection. And there's an art or a secret to doing that.

People wonder sometimes. "How do I know if I have an infection?" Well, there's many, many doctors that are aware of a yeast infection today. And they can even order a test from labs like Great Plains, Genova Diagnostics. They have what's called an organic acids test. And on there, if you take the test and you have high levels of something called arabinose, that's a definite indication that you do have candidiasis.

But the first thing they do is they'll think, "Well, let's just put you on an antifungal drug." And it'll take away those symptoms temporarily. But as soon as you go off that drug, and most people don't want to stay on it for the rest of their life, those symptoms come back. The infection's actually worse. It comes back worse than before.

**Dr. Axe:** Yeah, I know, Donna. I have seen that in so many patients I've taken care of over the years, to where they've gone. They've gotten antifungals or antibiotics prescribed. When they finally come into my office, they're much worse than they ever were before when they started seeing their conventional physician because it's this vicious cycle of when they take an antibiotic or antifungal, then you're starting to damage the gut lining. Things just get out of control.

I'd love to hear your thoughts on another medication possibly that I've seen cause candida in some of my patients. And that's birth control pills. Do you



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have any thoughts on contraceptive pills or birth control?

**Donna:** Oh, definitely, they contribute to the problem. Originally, everybody thought the reason we got candidiasis was because of the overuse of antibiotics. And then it became very clear that women were more likely to have candidiasis than men. And then they noticed that birth control pills were absolutely contributing to the problem.

Again, nobody quite understood why. But years later, one thing we do know is the yeast actually feed off of estrogen. And a birth control pill is 150 times more estrogen than a woman's naturally going to make in a day in her own body. So we're giving and the woman who's taking a birth control pill and she's taking this vast amount of estrogen, she's just feeding the yeast. So absolutely, they're contributing to the infection being worse.

**Dr. Axe:** So obviously we've talked about a little bit about candida. What's specifically is the cause of candida today, or the many causes?

**Donna:** Well, there are many causes today. I'm going to guess from my point of view that it started when we began using antibiotics because back in those days... You see, Body Ecology is based on seven universal laws, principles that we have to live by. We get to live on this Earth for a certain period of time. And there's laws already in place when we get here.

One of those is the principle of step by step. Like if you look at the sun coming up in the morning, it comes up in little tiny increments. But it also goes down in tiny increments. And that's what I call the principle of step by step. But I always use these principles. I feel like if these are Nature's laws, these are God's laws, these are the ones we should be following. And they'll lead us to answers.

So step by step is an important one because things occur in step-by-step order. So what happened was we started with the antibiotics. And then we



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continued to escalate the use of them. So they were using a huge amount. Then fast forward to the next generation. And now you've got a whole generation of men and women who had a lot of antibiotics, particularly women. They take them for their skin. They use them to regulate periods. So women took a lot of them. And then, of course, they have the birth control pill at the same time.

Now, they come and they get pregnant. And while they're carrying their baby, this is a natural thing, during the pregnancy their blood sugar goes up. And that's important for his brain to be healthy. And then progesterone goes up and estrogen goes up. Those are natural normal good things to happen during the pregnancy.

But that happens to feed the yeast. So now if she goes into that pregnancy with a...Let's say on a scale of 1 to 10, she was a 7 because you can have a very acute infection and die from it. Like a cancer patient being treated with radiation and chemo, their yeast becomes really bad. And they die from it, not from the cancer. Or an AIDS patient with a weak immune system dies from it.

So it might be down to say three some of the times. And then, it goes up to five or six. But now, she gets pregnant. Now, it's going to go way up to like 7 or 8 during your pregnancy. And she doesn't even know it. She may not have a vaginal infection at all. This is what's going on in her body. And what she's doing now is passing that infection on to her baby.

So babies are born with it. And we see this all the time. I've worked with a lot of women through their pregnancies. I know this is going to be an issue. And so we do something the minute the babies are born to overcome that. And then, our babies don't have a problem with it anymore. This is a really important message I'd like to get out is that babies are born with yeast infections today.

So now, we have generations of people. Honestly, from about the age of 50,



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you'll see a growing and growing number. So that babies coming in today, including every single child I've ever known with autism, they're always born with a yeast infection. And it is a contributing factor to autism, which is on the rise and will continue to be on the rise. And like with our children, for the last 13 years, we've consistently prevented autism in our bodies. This is the answer is to know that they have a yeast infection and know what to do about it.

But the other thing that's really, really frightening is that some time ago, the medical profession decided that all OB/GYNs, if they're going to deliver a baby, they need to test the woman while she's pregnant to see if she has this bacteria in the vagina called group B strep. And lots and lots of women have it. But it's just harmless.

But it could become pathogenic. Most bacteria can become pathogenic. *E. coli* can be or not. So this is one of those. And if it becomes pathogenic—if, that's a big word, then it could harm the baby. So just I think they want to make money, frankly. They decided, whoever makes these decisions, that every single baby being born will be on IV antibiotic from the moment the mother goes into labor and checks into the hospital.

So if she didn't have a yeast infection before, now she's certainly going to. And so is the baby. So we see lots and lots of babies born with it. And this has been going on for decades now. That's why I don't even need to see a test. I just start off assuming the person needs to deal with the yeast infection in their body.

**Dr. Axe:** You've given us some great things on the side effects of candida, what's causing it today. Obviously, as you said there's a lot of causes.

The other question I would have is I think a lot of people that have candida, they're listening. Most people have gut issues or have some form of candida. And a lot of people listening have probably tried a lot of different treatments.





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They've tried changing their diet. They've tried some supplements. They've tried medications. And many of them to no prevail. Why is candida so difficult to overcome?

**Donna:** Well, thanks for asking that, Josh. That's a great question because I thought about that for a long, long time. And then, it began to become clear that there's several really important reasons why you just can't get rid of it.

First of all, don't even try to. It's not going to go anywhere. But you can keep it down where it's not really a problem in the body. I equate it to a viral infection like herpes. As long as the virus is in there and you never have any sign of it, it's just in there. And that's how we think of this infection, too.

But the yeast, because we're not doing the right things, we don't realize that we have this infection. And so they're alive and well and thriving in our body. They are always secreting toxins. So far, they've identified over 79 different dangerous toxins. And those toxins are doing all kinds of things. Like a group of them are slamming the immune system. So the immune system doesn't have a chance.

You've got to starve out the yeast, and at the same time, build the immune system side by side. And you can't do that if the infection, it's raging in your body and is slamming your immune system big time, you're never going to get it under control.

One of the toxins it secretes, zymocin, it causes all the skin conditions that people have like eczema and psoriasis and rosacea. There's 79 of them. So I don't have them all memorized. But a really, really serious toxin is called acetaldehyde. And that one, if you Google acetaldehyde, you'll see just millions of studies on it because when we drink alcohol, our body produces acetaldehyde.

And if you're real healthy and you can clear it, then you can get away with a



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little alcohol, hopefully. But this is 24/7. This is the yeast secreting acetaldehyde 24/7 all the time. And you can't clear it. And the reason there's so much research on it is because alcoholism is such a problem. And they realize it's the acetaldehyde that's so extremely dangerous.

So the yeasts are eating nutrients that we need to feed themselves. They use up our minerals. They eat up amino acids. And then, the other thing that they do that very, very few people know about, unfortunately, is they are making oxalates. Now, lots of people haven't even heard of what an oxalate is. But it's these crystal-like substances that are formed inside our body by the yeast.

They're already present in Nature. They're not in any animal foods. They're not in dairy. But they are in plants, all the plants. And some of them have a lot of oxalates like spinach and chocolate, sweet potato, and so on, nuts and seeds. They have a lot of oxalates. And some don't have as many oxalates. But they're in the plant to protect the plant from the insects eating it up. So it's like a protection for the plant.

And then Nature, which is always amazing to me how cleverly Nature has got everything worked out, but in our human gut, we're supposed to have a bacteria called oxalobacter formigenes. And that bacteria is supposed to eat the oxalates. So it's okay for us to eat these foods if oxalobacter formigenes is in there.

But when we take an antibiotic, he dies. And he's gone. This is a bacteria that comes in our gut about the time we start crawling, not at birth, but down the road a ways. And then when we wipe him out, he's gone. And so that's his only job is to sit there and eat oxalates.

Now, other bacteria have to take over. But they're not as efficient at doing that. There are a few that I think are very important to have in the gut for that reason. But this oxalate issue is enormous. And Susan Owens and Dr. William Shaw from the Great Plains Laboratory have been the key people



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who've been out there holding the flame, waving it, hoping people would pick it up over all these years.

But now that we can have our genes tested and read our genes, we're beginning to see the enormous impact that oxalates are also having on our genes. And before you can even fix your genetic SNPs, you have to get this oxalate issue under control, which, again step by step go back before that, you've got to bring the candidiasis under control.

So the oxalates are being produced by the yeast. What they're doing is the yeast produce an enzyme called collagenase. And that enzyme reacts with collagen in the gut. So a lot of this is happening in the gut. This is where the gut fits in. In so many ways, the gut has connected to this. And then that's where the oxalates come from. So we are constantly cranking it out if we have a yeast infection in our body.

Now, some people genetically have, they have type I and type II hyperoxaluria. So they're already born with an issue with oxalates. And those people, they very easily form kidney stones. But what people don't realize is that if you eat foods high in oxalates, you're going to make this oxalate in your body. And it gets into your tissues. It literally goes everywhere.

You can get in your muscles. And it causes a lot of pain. And then people have fibromyalgia. They think they have fibromyalgia. But when they get rid of the oxalates, the high-oxalate foods in their diet, then in a few days the pain's gone. And it can get into the brain, into the blood-brain barrier. It can block the flow of urine.

We find with children with autism, they frequently urinate because if they went in like three or four times a day and had a lot of urine, it would be very painful to them. So they've learned to go often, like 50 times a day even. But only a little bit of urine comes out because it's painful for them.



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But you can get the oxalates in your bone. They'll literally force out your bone cells. They affect the eyes and the thyroid and the lungs. So they're really, really dangerous. And when they push out bone cells like that, they cause anemia.

So a lot of people have anemia for this reason. They can be in the testicles. And then, vulvodynia is another condition where more women suffer from. It's a combination of oxalates and candidiasis, so again, got to be on an anti-fungal diet like Body Ecology. You got to not be eating these high oxalates foods.

And then, what foods are high in oxalates? Well, the highest are like spinach, beets, chocolate, nuts and seeds, and soy. Soy is a really big one. Dr. William Shaw, who by the way, I have a fantastic podcast with on my *Body Ecology Living*. I just think everyone should listen to him talk about oxalates on that podcast.

But he was telling me at an autism conference we were at a couple of years ago that the prisoners in this state had called him in to testify for them because they were all really, really sick. And they were always...For the State to save money—they're just prisoners—so who cares what they eat. They were always fed soy. They didn't have meat. They had soy. And they were super sick.

And then he told me that he knew they were going to win their case because what he had them do was have their stomachs x-rayed. And they literally had stalactites, what you see in a cave, the stone icily thing hanging down from the cave. Those were in their stomachs. And that's from eating the soy because that's the calcification that high-oxalate foods are causing.

So what I see all the time—I just really wince—is that a lot of people...We love smoothies. They can be great. But how people are making them is they'll put like a couple handfuls of spinach. And they'll put in some maybe almond milk.



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Or during the day, maybe they put berries, which are high in oxalates. And then, they'll put in... Eat nuts and seeds all day long because they're this great snack. And then they'll have a little chocolate, just a little piece of chocolate.

Tea, everybody thinks green tea is great for you. Green and black tea are very high in oxalates. They don't realize that altogether the total amount of oxalates is just off the charts. And it's very much damaging the body of many, many people, especially because we have candidiasis and especially because we lack the healthy gut microbes. So that was a long explanation, but a really important topic. And it's treatable.

But that's the thing that I love about the gut. You can fix it. About genes, you can fix it. This problem can be fixed. There's a way to eat. The sugar-free, dairy-free, casein-free diet, bringing the yeast under control, and then avoiding these real high-oxalate foods. And then, with your meals, it's a really good idea to take some calcium and magnesium citrate because then that will bind those oxalates while you're eating so they can't get into your bloodstream.

And then B6 and lysine are both really, really important to take those, as well. There's actually quite a lot of genes that are connected to this, as well, too. But I won't go into that. But the gut and the genes are the two hottest things in science. For the rest of our lives, we are going to be exploring those two worlds.

And it's going to be amazing! It already is amazing what we know. But we're just at the tip of the iceberg here. And what we're about to discover over the next 5 years and 25 years, we will be living in a World like no man has ever lived in ever, where we'll have just so many answers. So I'm really excited to be alive today and be a part of this movement.

One thing I would want to—and I know you feel this way, too, Joshua—vitamin C, when you have oxalates, you want to keep your vitamin C, the



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amount you're taking down to under 2,000 milligrams a day. And for people that do IV drips and put a lot of vitamin C into their IV bags, they'll take in as much as 50,000. They may need more vitamin C. But that's a dangerous thing to do if you have oxalates in your body. So just take 2,000 milligrams a day. That's enough and try to get your vitamin C mostly from your food.

There's a supplement called chondroitin sulfate. That's a nice supplement, too. That's really good for helping the calcium crystals form in your body. It protects your bones and joints and so on.

So there's always a solution. That's the beautiful thing. There is something you can do about this. I don't like to be the barer of gloomy and doomy news all the time because there's always a solution. If you look for it, you'll find it. It's just another way we can all be healthier.

**Dr. Axe:** Love it. Well, great advice. Well, we've talked about some of the things you want to stay away from, which is obviously oxalates. And some of the ones I think probably surprised people, dark chocolate, spinach, soy, peanuts, even things like rhubarb, tea, green tea—there's a lot of things out there—black pepper.

Let's talk about some of the things we can eat. I know again, you've been a pioneer of fermented foods. Can you talk a little bit about how you were instrumental in bringing fermented foods over here? And what do you want people to know about them today and what some of your favorites are?

**Donna:** Well, first of all, I began to somehow stumble upon an awareness. I'm not even sure how it first all started. But I began to understand that there's this community in our gut. And no one was ever talking about it. It wasn't out there. Like I could go find studies done by microbiologists reporting to each other in their journals about bacteria. But I don't even know how I started to put this all together.



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But I knew there was this world inside of us. And there wasn't even any language. I had to come up with a term so I could teach people about it. So I sat in the kitchen one night. And I came up with the term "inner ecosystem" because everyone was all concerned about the environment and how we were killing the animals and destroying the air and water and so on. And I thought, "Well, we have an ecosystem inside of us, too. And its got all this bacterium in there."

Now, fast forward a couple of decades, and there's so much that we know about the microbiome. But I just knew they talked to each other and they talked to the gut wall. And that was important. And sure enough, there's solid science to show that today.

But then, I realized after like as part of all that was evolving, I thought, "Well, how did they get there?" And then, it began to become clear to me that...Oh, and also I'd begun working with autistic children. And I kept thinking, "Well, why are they autistic? It's got to start somewhere. What's the cause?" And then, different pieces of information began to make sense.

But I began to understand that at birth, we're born into a world through the birth canal. And that's our first exposure. At least, that's what we thought. That's what I thought. And now later, people thought that, too. But just recently, we now know that there's even bacteria in the womb of the baby. So it's first exposure.

And I've always thought, too, when that mucous plug comes out about 10 days before the mother starts really going into labor, obviously the bacteria can walk right on up into the womb at that point. But, yeah, the babies are exposed to it at birth or before we're born. And that's a very important process that men never paid any attention to. Nobody thought, didn't even know about it to pay attention to it. But it's so important to start life off with this exposure to these bacteria. So that evolved.



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And then I realized, “Well, then what do we do, those of us that didn’t get that good start to life?” And what do you do when you’re 30 and 50 and so on. And that’s when I realized the fermented foods were bringing bacteria. But we didn’t have any here. So I had so much trouble getting information. I would call Cornell, their food science. Nobody knew anything except cheese. They knew about cheese.

And I called Beatrice Trum Hunter. And she had kefir grains once. But they died. And she just ate a yogurt now. And she’d written a book see on kefir and yogurt and stuff. It was just really hard.

And then a miracle happened. I went over to a ceremony in the mountains of Japan. And the weirdest thing was I didn’t even talk to this friend of mine. But he came to the ceremony, too. And he had these two friends with him. And the woman, the wife that was with him, his friend, she said she had something to bring me. She just was told to bring me something. And I thought, “Oh, my Gosh! What?”

And then she opens up this little brown bag, her purse. And then, she brings out this little bottle, which is also brown with a cream top. I’ll never forget this. And she had a little carton of milk in that little bag. And she had a strainer, a little, little strainer. And she had the waiter bring over a glass. And then, she poured what was in that glass jar into the glass. So what it was, she had brought me kefir grains. And she put them back in the jar and put some milk over them, and gave me that.

And I went home about three days later with this little brown jar with these kefir grains in it. And I was like stunned. And I was a little bit afraid I couldn’t get into the country with them. They didn’t say a word. I got in. And I started getting milk, raw, good milk. And I’d ferment it.

And then, I’d been working with a few people with cancer. And one woman had gone down to the Gerson Institute. And she was really weak. She’d been





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doing a lot of juicing. And anyway, she came back. And I could tell how weak she was. So I suggested that she start making this. Believe it or not, she had sheep or something on her farm up in Cottageville, Georgia. And she started making it and about ten days later, called me back, and the change in her voice was remarkable. She just had so much strength. And I thought, “Wow!” because she wanted to stay on the raw diet for the cancer and all. But this is raw milk—kefir fermented milk.

And so after that, about five or six other people also in the same state where they had cancer, too, and I recommended that they eat more a raw diet. And we have a raw diet, too, that we recommend. The Body Ecology Diet’s very adaptable. We have the principle of uniqueness. So there’s not one way for everybody to eat. So they all started having their raw diet with their goat kefir. And every single one of them just got stronger and thrived.

And so in the meantime, these grains, they grow like crazy. And so I was giving them away to everybody. And some people don’t do well on them. And then, I learned a lot about that in those days.

But I also was lecturing out in the Seattle area. And people would bring me—this is like now we’re fast-forwarding another maybe two years—and people would bring me—the lecture was on kefir—so they would bring these big jars of kefir. And they’d say to me, “Is this safe to eat?” And they weren’t. They have like grey bubbles on the top and pink and green stripes around the side of the glass jar.

And then I realized then that that’s the danger in using kefir grains is that they’re too easy to contaminate. And I didn’t want the FDA...I was already promoting Stevia and coconut oil. And here is Monsanto. And they didn’t want Stevia in the country. So I thought, “I just can’t risk teaching everybody about kefir grains and then have somebody die just because we lacked the knowledge. We don’t have enough education around this yet.”



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Now, everyone knows about fermented foods. But those were the days when they didn't. And so I pretty much began to look for starters. And then, I realized putting a starter into the fermented vegetables is smart, too. That's another story. I won't go into that.

But it's amazing how it all came together. I always say the hand of God is in this work. I really believe that—whatever your definition of God is—I really believe there's some power that's very much helping us right now because we're in trouble. And we have to change directions immediately. Our children are really at risk. Within 15 years, every other baby being born will be on the spectrum. That's what's predicted. So we're past time. Time has run out.

So building the immune system, having a healthy gut, bringing these infections under control, building our energy up, and having brains that work so that we can turn this whole situation around, which is why we wanted to do the Gut Summit because we know how important to have all this information out there to people, no matter where they live in the world.

**Dr. Axe:** Absolutely. As I said, you have such an amazing background in gut-healing foods. I love hearing it every time. I just have a couple more questions for you. One of them is I'd love to hear any thoughts on supplements, herbal, or things like that that you think might benefit the gut. I know one of the things I've come across and used the past several years in treating patients with candida is Pau d'arco or Pau d'arco tea. What are your thoughts on that and then, any other herbals that you may suggest?

**Donna:** Well, the yeasts are definitely causing a huge amount of inflammation. So berberine, oil of oregano is also good, as is Pau d'arco in killing, helping bring them down. But I didn't usually recommend that people go to those right away. Berberine, yes. But killing off, there's formulas that people have that are very good for killing yeast. And you can buy those in the health food stores.

But the thing is is that you've got to do this slowly. You don't want a huge



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amount of die-off because our bodies are not designed to handle this enormous rush of toxins that have to be dealt with because we have all these other toxins in our body anyway. So I find that just diet alone. And the key again is the fermented foods.

Now that we know so much about the gut, we know that it's very, very important to have fiber in the diet, which is why a diet that's very rich in plant foods, 80/20, like 80 plant foods, 20 in the protein, let's say, or quinoa and millet. But keep the diet very rich in plant foods because then you're going to feed the microbes in your gut.

And one of the recent things that the scientists are realizing is that we need a microbiome with a lot of diversity in it. The more diversity the better because they're in there making short-chained fatty acids and other things that give us energy, protect our gut lining, and so on. And so that's very important.

And then diversity, well, that's what you get in these fermented foods like the cultured vegetables. If you take a head of cabbage out in the garden and bring it in. There's all kinds of bacteria that have been growing together since that cabbage was a little seed. And then, they've been working together as a team, all these bacteria. So they have this amazing synergy. Now, you're going to ferment that. Shred it up and pack it in a jar and ferment it. You're bringing that into your body that's this again that incredible wisdom that nature has.

So the fermented foods to me are first and foremost. Most doctors will tell you that take a probiotic. And I like probiotics, particularly bifidus. But I definitely think the fermented foods...Now, they're not for everybody. If you've got SIBO, then you can't have the fermented foods until you wipe out the pathogens in the small intestine, which again this is where Pau d'arco and oil of oregano and berberine, and so on.

They're foods that kill that microbe in the small intestine. Once they're gone, then, of course, you want to reestablish that inner ecosystem so that now



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you're protected from getting the SIBO again because it'll come back. And you'll have a relapse. So establishing that inner eco system is key. And the fermented foods are key for that, too.

A high-fat and high-sugar diet kills the good bacteria. And that's what a lot of us are eating today, way too much fat and way too much sugar. And one of the things, Josh, that I absolutely loved when I interviewed Dr. Leo Galland, was he's come up with this wonderful theory, what they know in the gut now. And he calls it the "Alexander organisms."

And the reason I loved it when he taught me about this is that—and we talked about it on our interview—is you've got all these vast amount of microbes like huge amounts of them. And then you have to think, "Well, there are groups of people, groups of microbes, they need a leader. Who are they going to know to follow? How do they know what to do? Somebody has to tell them what to do."

So he has this Alexander theory, where...Actually, it's brilliant because there are certain microbes in the gut that are like Alexander the Great. Remember, he like conquered the world practically. And he had thousands and thousands of troops following him just simply because he was Alexander. And that's what you do. You followed him.

And so in the gut, too, we have Alexander organisms that they're finding now are that are the leaders of the pack, so to speak. And one of those is johnsnoii. And another one is Christian canella. But also, another one is lactobacillus plantarum.

And that's what I put in the starter. When I teach people how to make cultured vegetables, we have the lactobacillus plantarum in there. And that's why because lactobacillus plantarum produces folate. It's a really important B vitamin that we need. Gut B vitamin is important for methylation and detoxification and so on.



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But plantarum also degrades histamine. And a lot of people have histamine reactions in the gut. And then they react to foods that they're eating. So the plantarum will degrade that histamine and prevent them from having too high levels of histamine. You need histamine. It's important. But you don't want too much histamine or you can be pretty miserable. But they eat up the oxalates that I was talking about in the beginning. They're really great at eating oxalates. And they're antiviral.

And if you have to take an antibiotic for some reason—and we do sometimes have to take them—and you're eating the fermented vegetables with the plantarum in there, most of the antibiotics that they've created today, the plantarum is resistant to those antibiotics. So you won't be left without wipeout in the gut though as the yeast takes over. So I think a starter is very, very important.

And the very, very latest thing I've discovered...I just think I'm so excited about this because a whole lot of people produce methane gas. Now, when we eat foods, particularly plant foods, they naturally get broken down. They're supposed to be broken down by the bacteria in the gut. And they produce hydrogen. But then, if you have certain other microbes in the gut, those microbes will take the hydrogen and do something with it.

So there's this class of microbes called archaea. And they're not so good to have. About 50% of us have them, probably inherited from...Passed down from our mother. They can be there at birth or eventually a whole bunch of us have them.

Now, archaea takes that hydrogen and makes methane. And then, lots and lots of people become constipated their whole lifelong because of this. And also the methane, it causes constipation. So it causes gas and bloating and constipation because of the methane produced by the archaea.

So I lived in Japan for a while and studied the food over there and studied



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macrobiotics and so on. While, I was there, they had this interesting wild yam, a potato, like a member of the potato family, but very rare, mostly just in Japan. And they used to take it. And they made something they called shirataki from it. And you can actually buy that today.

And back in those days, then I'd say, "What? Why are you eating this? What's this for?" And they'd say, "Oh, it's real good for digestion. It clears toxins from the gut." And I'd think, "Okay, that's good." And it wasn't available over here. So that was that.

And then I found it. And it's available in Whole Foods and everything. And it is amazing for reducing the archaea. So you probably won't ever get rid of them maybe. Maybe you can. But so far, you can surely reduce the archaea so they don't make the methane. And in a few weeks or a month or so, you will find that they help tremendously with gas, bloating, and lifelong constipation.

So that's one of my latest exciting things. The gut and the genes are the most exciting areas. I don't know who would want to go to the moon, when they can study the gut, actually much more fascinating than that old dried up moon.

**Dr. Axe:** I'm going to quote you on that, Donna. That is the quote of the year. I love that. And that's why I said at the beginning of the interview, this is why I wanted to co-host this summit with you. I was excited to interview you because again you are such a pioneer in this industry. And I know I appreciate that so much.

And I just want to redirect everybody. Hey, if you want to learn more about Donna, obviously you've heard some of her interviews, if you want to check out some of her products, she's got a great online newsletter. I just want to encourage you, check out her website. It's [BodyEcology.com](http://BodyEcology.com). Again, that's [BodyEcology.com](http://BodyEcology.com).

She's got some great things on there like coconut kefir, and kefir starter, and



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some of the things we've talked about on here, as well, some fantastic products, again wonderful newsletter.

And I just want to say, Donna, this was great. Learning about, talking about oxalates, overcoming candida, and fermented foods, and some of the other things you shared with us, just life-transforming. So I just want to say I appreciate you allowing me to host you. And also, it's been a pleasure I know co-hosting the Summit out here with you.

**Donna:** Ditto! That's the same for me, Josh. You are a fantastic interviewer. And every one of the interviews should be heard. So I'm really excited. I hope people realize that it takes a lot of work to put on a summit. And we're doing this for you all. So please listen to the interviews. Listen to them more than one time. This is fantastic information that's life changing.

Thank you so much, Josh! You're the one that emailed me and said, "Hey, do you want to do it?" And I said, "Absolutely, especially with you!"

**Dr. Axe:** Awesome! Well, thanks again, Donna. Thanks everybody for listening. I know we've got a lot more great interviews to come. This has been Donna Gates, the pioneer of gut health, and myself, Dr. Josh Axe with the Heal Your Gut Summit!

Have a great day!