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rē•move “one size fits all” from your vocabulary.

By: rē•spin



Dr. Nigma Talib is an esteemed naturopathic doctor who doesn’t subscribe to a “one size fits all” model of health, an outdated notion in the modern concept of health. She considers herself a “biochemical detective,” always trying to get to the root cause of her patients’ problems in lieu of simply treating their symptoms with a metaphorical “band-aid” (no pun intended) over the issue. In the process, Dr. Talib takes into account a patient’s unique genetic expression in order to customize a tailored approach that integrates preventative methods into the treatment plan. This proactive health model contrasts with the reactive treatment style that is all too often at work in our society.

Gut-Flammation: The Root of Systemic Inflammation

There is really no facet of life where “one size fits all” is appropriate. Particularly as it relates to health, where there is no simple solution for every single person on earth. “Each person might require something a little different, depending on their level of a state I refer to as ‘gut-flammation,’” Dr. Talib tells rē•spin. “Gut-flammation is like a fire burning inside the gut, damaging everything it touches.” This typically occurs as a result of increased **dysbiosis** (i.e., an imbalance of the gut’s microbiome) leading to increased **intestinal permeability**, which triggers systemic inflammation. Our diets and what we consume on the day-to-day can also contribute to this state of being, because, as Dr. Talib puts it, “You are what you eat.”

This state has cosmetic effects, too. It’s been something we’ve been told our whole lives, passed down from those who came before us: what you put into your body will show up on your skin. “Food can be your skin’s medicine, but it can also be a poison,” Dr. Talib explains. “It can heal the skin, or wreak havoc upon it. I have seen eating the wrong diet create premature aging on someone’s skin in a very short period of time.

Because each of us is unique in our genetic makeup and in our day-to-day decisions, there’s no specific plan for each person to follow. This is why Dr. Talib pinpoints dietary and lifestyle changes that uniquely yield the most benefits to *you*. Think of it as an opportunity to analyze your symptoms as your body’s reaction to your decisions; in this case, the foods that you eat. She takes this holistic approach to well-being and uses it to think long-term.

Getting Started on Treating the Gut

Dr. Talib is not exaggerating when she says that she looks to the gut when treating each of her patients. “It really is the control center for the entire body,” she said. “Anything that goes wrong in the gut will cause symptoms all over your body—and it will absolutely show as problems on your face, sooner or later.” Again, this does not just wreak

havoc on health but has aesthetic consequences, too; in this way, even aging can be viewed as a symptom of health! She explains, “Healing the gut is absolutely the most fundamental step to fight premature aging, and it needs to be well underway before you start any of the other plans that follow.

If **Dr. Talib** suspects that a patient has a leaky gut, she typically will order a permeability test. This involves drinking a solution that contains sugars that are not normally absorbed by the body. A few hours after consumption, she then runs a urine test. If a patient has healthy digestion, the sugars will not be found in the urine samples. But if they're present, it is a sign that your gut lining has become permeable and that the contents of your intestines have leaked into your bloodstream. This initial test is then followed by a stool test with samples taken over three consecutive days in order to analyze the bacteria in the gut and what could potentially be living alongside them. When intestinal permeability is implicated, it should prompt the patient to take the necessary steps to help boost the integrity of their digestive tract.

When it comes to looking at our health from a high-level overview, Dr. Talib wants us to keep in mind that the underlying cause of the issue is what should be addressed. Symptoms are important indicators of what this problem is. Though she doesn't advocate for never taking medications again — after all, you deserve relief — but seeking “band-aid” solutions can allow underlying medical conditions to worsen over time. If you're consistently taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like aspirin or ibuprofen for chronic pain or headaches, why settle for a short-term solution?

The Gut-Skin-Immune Emphasis

“The gut is the control center of the body. Whatever happens in the gut will show up in the skin and dictate the health of your entire body,” Dr. Talib rē-emphasizes. But from skin eruptions and acne to premature aging, she also wants you to know that the state of your **skin** — the body's largest organ — can hold major clues to the state of your overall health. “As I say to my patients, the state of your bowels will eventually create jewels!”

Something that Dr. Talib wants you to know is that the skin is the gateway to your immune system. “The largest organ in the human body is often ignored in the fight against disease [but] this ‘shield’ is the first line of defense against inflammation and infection,” she says. The overarching goal of her work with patients is to remove toxic substances, including irritations, pathogens, and damaged cells, in order to facilitate more robust health trajectories. But the fact is that **premature aging** can be a major indicator of what is going on beneath the surface. “Our bodies are aging faster than ever. Increase consumption of processed foods, sedentary lifestyles, and overwhelming stress are feeding this process,” Dr. Talib laments. As she points out, this is leading to the “epidemic growth” of conditions such as Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, obesity, heart disease, and auto-immune diseases.

The gateway to our immune system is the skin. The largest organ in the human body is often ignored in the fight against disease. This “shield” is the first line of defense against inflammation and infection. Inflammation is the body's mechanism for self-protection. The goal is to remove toxic substances, including irritants, harmful pathogens, and damaged cells. This is the first step in the healing process. Improved health and a better quality of life can be achieved by addressing the underlying causes of inflammation and infection. Our bodies are aging faster than ever. Increased consumption of processed foods, sedentary lifestyles, and overwhelming stress are feeding this process. This is leading to the epidemic growth of type 2 diabetes mellitus, obesity, heart disease, and auto-immune conditions.

rē-Thinking Modern Health Planning

In this day and age, with so many different treatments and even **genetic testing** available to us, why settle for reactive treatment planning? The fact is that utilizing multiple modalities of healing can inform our interaction with our health in proactive ways that are downright transformative for our **health and wellness**. Functional and integrative practitioners like Dr. Talib, who tailor healing to meet your specific needs, overriding the **one-size-fits-all** approach, are some of our most powerful allies in the journey to mind-body-spirit wellness.

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