

# DON'T BUG ME

## BUGGING OUT OR BALANCED

Bugs are everywhere, around us, on us, and even in us – not insects, but microorganisms. In fact, these tiny, often single-cell but sometimes more complex, critters have colonized your body (and mine), but don't bug out! This is all quite normal and usually healthy, and it has been this way for centuries.

Most of these microorganisms are healthy or benign, so long as they, or we, are in balance. In fact, in a healthy human, there are more cells that are not "you" in you than there are cells of you in your body. Let's let that sink in. The cells that don't have your DNA number in the trillions. They consist of various bacteria, yeasts, phages, archaea, viruses, eukaryotes and potentially and occasionally some more complex organisms, but more on them later. The colon alone contains pounds of these microbial residents. Every surface of the body, from scalp to toenails and every surface between has a population hard at work. Most of them are beneficial and support healthy function of the body, working in symbiosis with each other, and you, doing essential work. They help digest our food, protect us from pathogens by patrolling our borders, and create vitamins and neurotransmitters essential for our healthy function.

## Unwelcome Guests

As one can imagine, not all these microorganisms are helpful all the time. Balance is key, and modern life with stress, pollution, medication and the industrial food supply that is not always so pure, as well as other humans and our companion animals, can create multiple challenges and vectors for disruption. We are also occasionally exposed to more significant challenges or the overgrowth of yeasts or bacterial strains that are benign at lower population levels. Most of the time, a combination of the robust function of our biome, or the ecosystem that we host, our own immune system, and compounds from foods keep the "Bad Guys" off balance & in check or they just pass through. Other times, when we are not as well, poorly rested or stressed, or the challenge is significant such as contaminated food or a significant exposure to "Bad Guys," they can actually set up a colony and start using you as a host. This happens more often than we would like to acknowledge. Common symptoms of such a disbalance include gastrointestinal distress such as diarrhea, constipation, gas, bloating, nausea, & fatigue. Even some skin rashes, anal itching and irritation, and other randomly co-occurring symptoms can indicate a challenge to our internal balance.

## Change is Good... But Not Always Easy.

Changes to the biome, even and especially fast changes leading to a healthy, normal state, can be disruptive. This process is sometimes called a "Healing Crisis" or "Die Off" and can include a worsening of symptoms including headache, digestive upset with diarrhea, and minor rashes. To ease these symptoms, keeping hydrated and getting extra rest can be helpful. If symptoms worsen or do not abate in two or three days, it may be necessary to consult one's Health Care Practitioner. It is also important to note that some of the symptoms of disbalance can indicate more serious health conditions so regular health checks or an extra visit to your HCP is advised.

## Keep the Balance Right.

There are steps one can take to help maintain a healthy balance, and they are especially important when one suspects that the "Bad Guys" are out of hand. The most basic are hand washing, keeping one's (or one's children's) hands out of their mouths, daily changing of undergarments and frequent washing of bed linens and bath towels. Also important is eating fully cooked foods and rinsing all raw fruits and vegetables in clean water. Additionally, including high-quality fermented foods in the diet such as "live and unpasteurized" yogurt, kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut and pickles can be helpful. Increased intake of fruits and vegetables is advised as the fiber and many of the colorful flavonoids and phenolic compounds found in them support gut health, improve elimination and regularity, and are deleterious to "Bad Guy" populations. Including pungent herbs and spices as well as soothing herbs into the diet, either in food or as supplements, is a time-honored and now scientifically validated means to support the microbial balance. Spices like garlic, clove, peppermint, fennel, and even more obscure but powerful ingredients like wormwood and green walnut hull can be very helpful. Also helpful are supplements of healthy bacteria to "top up" and restore healthy flora. These probiotic bacteria are essential when removing "Bad Guys" as they can help prevent their regrowth and actually take over space in the digestive tract (or other locations) where the balance was disrupted. It's important to note that reducing the consumption of sugar, juices & soda, refined flour and fried foods, as well as limiting fatty foods, is also extremely beneficial.

## Spring Cleaning

Traditional healing practices and some very modern health advisors advocate for periodic cleanses or detoxes to assure that the body is working well. While traditional for the spring, there is no bad time of year to tune up one's health. This reset absolutely includes one's biome and the re-balancing of the complex ecosystem that can be disrupted by unwelcome strains and even parasitic organisms. Occasional tune ups can help one avoid more significant challenges from chronic disbalance and support a greater state of vibrant wellbeing. ParaGuard.



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