

Episode 167 Transcript

00:00:00:01 - 00:00:10:19

Erin Kenney

This isn't a cancer where, you know, the screening is just getting better or we're, you know, doing it differently. We're at a place where we really have to look at what we're doing in our lifestyle and try to find the explanation.

00:00:10:20 - 00:00:36:03

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Welcome to the DUTCH Podcast, where we dive deep into the science of hormones, wellness and personalized health care. I'm Doctor Jaclyn Smeaton, chief medical officer at DUTCH. Join us every Tuesday as we bring you expert insights, cutting edge research, and practical tips to help you take control of your health from the inside out. Whether you're a health care professional or simply looking to optimize your own well-being, we've got you covered.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

The contents of this podcast are for educational and informational purposes only. This information is not to be interpreted or mistaken for medical advice. Consult your health care provider for medical advice, diagnosis and treatment. Hi there and welcome to today's episode of the DUTCH podcast. Now, today's episode might feel outside the box of what we would cover on a hormone podcast, but there are so many important tie ins between gut health and colon cancer in hormones.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And today we're going to cover all of that. I actually was shocked to learn that colon cancer is the leading cause of cancer death for men under the age of 50, and the second leading cause of cancer death in younger women. And this is a really big problem. And one of the big issues here is that we're not even screening people until they're over 50.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

In most cases. But I think the real win is that the main drivers of this cancer in younger people are predominantly modifiable. So our guest today is a registered dietitian and a certified personal trainer with a master's degree in nutrition science,

Erin Kenney. She knows so much about the ins and outs of colon cancer and just gut health in general.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

She's really found this clinical focus the way a lot of practitioners do through her own experience. And after navigating the intersection of under fueling of maximizing athletic performance and having digestive disruption firsthand, she built a practice around finding the root causes rather than managing symptoms. She's now the founder and CEO of Nutrition Rewired, a Boston based private practice specializing in complex GI conditions including autoimmune disease, parts, mass and hormonal imbalances.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

She also authored the book Rewire Your Gut and Rewire Your Sweet Tooth, and has developed a line of lab tested gut health supplements. And she's the host of her own podcast, Nutrition Rewired. On this pod, we talked about so much from how you can prevent colon cancer to even some of the things that even functional medicine docs are still getting wrong when it comes to gut health.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And if you've ever wondered whether there's a connection between hormones, including estrogen and cortisol, with your gut health. Bottom line is there are. And we're going to cover all those as well. So let's go ahead and invite our guest in so we can get started. Well, Erin, I'm really thrilled to have you on the podcast today and to talk about a topic that is so critically important.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And I think nutritionally really overlooked but really critical for our health. So thanks for making the time to join me today.

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Erin Kenney

Yeah, absolutely. As we we talked about offline, it's becoming a topic that is really popular online of what we're seeing even in, you know, the public eye of a topic that is coming to be increasingly concerning among very younger populations.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Oh, absolutely. I before we dive into the meat of it, I do want our audience to understand a little bit more about your experience, because your clinical work really has sat in the intersection of gut health and these kind of overlapping, complex diagnoses. Can you talk a little bit about, especially in women in midlife of your patient population when it comes to colon health?

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Are we paying enough attention to colon health? And, and are we really, like, overlooking it until it's problematic?

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Erin Kenney

Sure. I think one of the biggest things that I'm seeing is that because of the way that we used to view risk for colon cancer and how it used to be seen as something that was only to be of a concern of 50 plus, you know, you 50 years old, you get your colonoscopy. You don't have to start thinking about it unless, you know, maybe your family had a history that was more concerning.

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Erin Kenney

So what I'm seeing is that people aren't really thinking about it. They're not typically feeling like it's something that they need to be worrying about at this time because, you know, maybe they aren't quite hitting that 50 mark yet. And you know, they're prioritizing so many other things. There's such a, intersection of a lot of different hormonal changes that are happening to.

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Erin Kenney

And I'm seeing a lot of that as well, is that we've got a lot of these hormonal shifts. And so clients are really focusing on just kind of their quality of life and not thinking about some of these bigger picture items that could be more concerning for their colon health, and they might be more focused on their weight or, you know, their sleep or their performance, you know, things like that that aren't directly related to, the health of the gut and what that really means for their long term health.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah. It's really interesting that you bring up this like age of 50, because I think conventionally that's when we start screening for colon health. But you work with a lot of patients that they're coming in to see you after they've had engagement with a lot of other providers and really not found the help that they were looking for, the relief, really, that they were looking for.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

What are the biggest gaps that you see? Is it really just screening or you know, how are we doing now from a conventional standpoint and addressing gut health before we get to a diagnosis of something like colorectal cancer?

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Erin Kenney

Sure. I think there's a lot of limitations in what can happen in a conventional medicine setting. You know, particularly with doctors, like a gastroenterologist or a primary care provider. You know, a woman will go in and say, you know, I'm dealing with bloating or constipation or gas. And and maybe they're not even fully experiencing all these or expressing all these things because they might not feel super comfortable or even think that some of these things are essential to talk about, but a lot of them are being written off of, oh, that's just normal, your midlife.

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Erin Kenney

That's menopause. As we get older, that just happens, you know? So some of it is just maybe ignorance on their understanding of what is or could be happening with some of these clients. They are doing an endoscopy, a colonoscopy and seeing that as kind of like their stopping point for some people of, oh, that's really all that we can do for you.

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Erin Kenney

There's no other, you know, tests that we can use to assess the gut microbiome and quite frankly, there aren't a lot of tests that we have to use conventionally that are diagnostic, and that are still very beneficial. Right. So there's other tests that we can use in functional medicine that are going to give us insights on the microbiome and our hormonal health and, you know, blood testing and things that we can do.

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Erin Kenney

That would be a nice adjunct to something like a colonoscopy or an endoscopy. They're also not doing dietary records. They're not asking much about their lifestyle. They're not looking at their metabolic function. In a lot of these appointments. So they're very narrow focused. And that's not to say that all of them are this way. I know some really wonderful functional gastroenterologists who are really knowledgeable and, you know, diverse in terms of how they're addressing their patients.

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Erin Kenney

But most of us would be going to our appointments and receiving a very narrowed view and recommendation based on simply just a small subset of symptoms. And a very short appointment.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah, it's fascinating because I think the the while with gut health and this is my experience with one of my kids, you know, 15 years ago. But we went in to see a pediatric GI specialist. It was a really it was at Dartmouth. It was like a great, you know, great program. But when they they worked him up for disease, like he doesn't have inflammatory bowel disease.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And it was like, okay, well I guess things are fine. And we were sent on our way and things were just so not fine. And that was interesting because I'm trained as a natural by the doctor at this point that we ended up discovering kind of what was bothering him, but there at that time, and I hope to think things have progressed.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

But it sounds like maybe it's slow too. There's so much need for functional gastroenterology because there's so many people who fall in between the space of disease and health when it comes to gut function, but when it with gut function, like are symptoms, quote unquote normal, you know, is it normal to have pain gas, bloating, constipation, diarrhea, like maybe normal isn't the right word because I think normal is more of a prevalence question, but is it okay?

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Is it I mean, should we leave those things alone and just chalk it up to, oh, it's aging, or are these problems that really need, need fixing?

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Erin Kenney

And I think that's what really prevents a lot of people from getting early detection for outcomes that could be more dangerous down the road. You know, people just they either write off their own central symptoms or their symptoms are written off in some of these appointments. And you're right, you know, if you don't have inflammatory bowel disease or you don't have, you know, celiac disease, then off you go, you're on your way.

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Erin Kenney

And like you said, there's so much that we can do in the interim to help optimize your gut health, optimize your metabolic health, and get you to a point where you're feeling better to, you know, your quality of life matters. And, you know, I talk to this about clients. All the debt, all the time is it doesn't matter if your labs look normal, if you don't feel good that that's the most important thing.

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Erin Kenney

You know, quality of life is is really important.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Right? I mean, if you're avoiding food because it's so painful when you eat or you get such uncomfortable bloating or you can't leave your house because you're tied to the bathroom, like these are right? Humungous, impactful. And these are all real situations I've encountered with my patients. Yeah, historically. I mean, it can be so profoundly impactful to life day to day living that it and affecting mental health, affecting relationships.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

It's it's a huge problem.

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Erin Kenney

I've seen clients who have come to me after 70 years of eating on a restrictive diet, and they just have kind of accepted it without any sort of questioning. And even their doctors sometimes are saying like, oh yeah, just keep avoiding those foods. If you feel good, stay in a low Fodmap diet for 20 years. You know, like these are really harmful diets that we're seeing as well.

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Erin Kenney

And in practice, seeing the effect that they have on the diversity of the gut, which we know is a huge factor in every aspect of our health, but especially when it comes to cancer risk and metabolic health.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

It's interesting. I you're making me think of like when you're saying that's like, just keep people on this restrictive diet. I am sure there are people listening to this podcast who have been on restrictive diets for a really long time, and it was a huge unlock for me in my own practice, because we really I did a ton of food allergy testing, like the IG testing.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And what I found was you ended up kind of chasing whatever people were eating at the time. Oftentimes. But you would come back with these patients where everything lights up and their response would be, oh my gosh, I just should eat only carrots, which is like the only thing that didn't show up were carrots and kale or whatever.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

But we have to think about that as not a food problem, but a gut problem. This is my own perspective. I want to hear yours as well. But when you see reactivity to foods, the food is usually not the problem. This is, and I'd love to know how you feel about this if you agree, because we should be able to eat food.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Our bodies are meant to do that. So either things aren't digesting properly and when proteins hit your intestine, they're too big, or you have a problem with your intestines and you're absorbing, you know, proteins that are too large and you're triggering your immune system or your gut integrity or your microbiome is off. It's almost like the food intolerance or allergy or the reaction is the sign of the problem, but maybe not the problem itself.

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Erin Kenney

I couldn't agree more. And in someone who I dealt with chronic digestive issues my whole life, I had the same result on my food sensitivity tests and the result was Sibo, chronic leaky gut. You know, things that were the food was a result of those things. And as someone who is very passionate about avoiding restrictive diets, you know, there are definitely times where reducing certain foods or cutting out certain foods is really helpful.

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Erin Kenney

It's really necessary. But my passion is to really help clients understand exactly what you're saying. Food is fuel, it is nutritious. It is healing in certain ways and so those food sensitivity tests have done a lot more harm than good. When people don't truly understand the concept of what you just said. If you are coming back, I call it like the Christmas tree food sensitivity test, where it's all lit up and everything comes back as flagged, you know, that's where we want to go.

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Erin Kenney

Look at your intestinal permeability. We want to look for Sibo. We want to look for, you know, imbalances in the microbiome because oftentimes, I would say 98% of the time a client will have that factor play into a huge reason as to why their food sensitivities are coming back as positive.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Are we seeing this shift in the functional medicine community now where people are paying more attention to that, like the gut restoration versus food elimination?

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Erin Kenney

I, I've so, so as you mentioned, like a lot of people do come to me after seeing a lot of providers, I'm still kind of dropping my jaw at how many functional medicine providers are still going straight for a food elimination before anything else. But I'm also seeing a lot of the opposite. But I'm a little biased because in my practice, the reason people come to me is because they've already been there.

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Erin Kenney

So I'd like to hope that I know a lot of good functional medicine providers, and I know they have the same they share the same sentiment as us on this topic. So I know that there are some great shifts in what we're seeing, but I do think some of the old school thinking in those, different providers is still there.

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Erin Kenney

And it just it just worries me because I, you know, these clients are they're not getting the care that they deserve in terms of truly the outcome of of diversifying the diet and getting to the root cause of why, you know, we're seeing those pop up now.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Why is it so important for people to eat a diverse diet versus these, like low-fodmap or avoiding different food groups?

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Erin Kenney

Yeah. So we have to think about the food as kind of like the seeds for our microbiome. It's essentially becoming food for the bacteria that live there. And those bacteria have many different purposes. They help to support our immune system. A big portion of our immune system is located in our gut. They help to protect the mucus layer in the gut, which keeps it nice and healthy and prevents, like you said, those larger proteins from passing from the gut into our blood.

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Erin Kenney

We want to feed those bacteria because they help to digest food and they also help to reduce inflammation. Beyond that, metabolic health, things like insulin resistance, cardiovascular brain health, all of these things are tied to gut health and come back to those beneficial, beneficial bacteria that are fed by the foods that we eat. So you can

think of it as simply as the more restrictive that your diet gets, the less diverse your gut microbiome gets.

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Erin Kenney

And I see this all the time in practice, even just a few weeks ago, a client came to me after being on a very restrictive carnivore diet, and the bacteria ts the for my kidneys, the Aker Manuka, which is an incredibly important bacteria for the gut lining. We're all completely plummeted down to almost zero. And of course like it made sense, you know, restrictive, low Fodmap diets.

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Erin Kenney

I see clients who have been on those for several months or even years, and we're just missing these keystone species that are important for our health. So again, you start off with the intention of I'm going to be restrictive with my diet for whatever reason, which might make you feel good in the interim. But then we create a long term problem of losing that diversity, which we know through, you know, thousands of research studies.

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Erin Kenney

A diverse microbiome is a healthy microbiome. We may not know exactly like every detail about what that looks like. But big picture across the board. Research shows that a healthy gut is a diverse one.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

I mean, I think you've just really sum that up. So perfectly. And I mean, it brings us into the topic that I want to make sure we really cover thoroughly today, which is colorectal cancer, which I was shocked, actually. I mean, colorectal cancer is framed as a disease of older adults, but that's really shifting. Like it's actually the leading cause of cancer death in men under 50.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And the second leading cause of cancer death in women. And researchers are really pointing to ultra processed foods. I'd, I'd love your take on it. When we talk about restrictive, let's call like a restrictive whole foods diet. That's what we've been talking

about so far. But then when you add in ultra processed foods and their impact on the microbiome and cancer, but also low fiber intake overall, in America and the microbiome disruption, we have these big drivers.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

So this has become, like I said, one of the leading causes of cancers in young people. How does that land clinically for you?

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Erin Kenney

I think it it focuses less on genetics. Right. So a lot of what we can see with older adults is that there and even younger adults, who is that there can be a genetic component of these rates of colon cancer. But there's such a small percentage of these younger adults, they're they're diagnoses being a result of genetics that we're starting to realize that if it's not mostly genetics, then it's got to be lifestyle.

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Erin Kenney

It's got to be diet, it's got to be immune system, it's got to be circadian rhythm. So there's all these different things that we have to understand that there must be something that we're doing differently. Right. And when we look at what's different, we start to look at each of those areas and say, yes, we do have a lot of more ultra processed foods.

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Erin Kenney

We do have a lot more stress in certain ways. We do have a lot of disruption in circadian rhythm. And this isn't a cancer where, you know, the screening is just getting better or we're, you know, doing it differently where we're at a place where we really have to look at what we're doing in our lifestyle and try to find the explanation.

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Erin Kenney

And we are seeing major shifts in the microbiome with colon cancer rates in younger individuals. So we do understand that the gut does play a role, and we do understand that all those factors the diet, the lifestyle influence the gut. So there's this very interconnected web, that hopefully shouldn't make us feel overwhelmed, but instead empower us to understand that there are many factors within our control where we

can't just say, this is just genetics.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah. And actually, it's almost refreshing and helpful to know that, you know, because you think about genetics as being kind of dictated to you and not modifiable. But what I'm hearing you say is actually for this patient population, you're really looking at modifiable risk factors, which is something that you can change. You can do something about it.

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Erin Kenney

Exactly. Yeah, I know there's a lot of fear around these diagnoses. I think the headlines recently we're seeing, I think it's what's not great, but also important is, you know, we're seeing this in the public eye. We're seeing movie stars and athletes being diagnosed with colon cancer. And while we don't like to see that happen, it is also good because it's creating more attention around it and more awareness around it.

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Erin Kenney

And, you know, we really do have to look at what we're doing every day and know that even small, simple changes not one major change because we don't. If you look across the board at the research, is it one specific bacteria? Is one specific food that we're eating? We cannot say for sure that there's anything that is causing it specifically, but we know that a combination of all of these things can make a difference.

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Erin Kenney

And so I try to tell clients, rather than just having this overarching fear, know that each of these areas of our health, we can put a little bit of effort into each day and know that we're making progress towards reducing our risk.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

What are the big buckets that you explain to your patients as far as reducing risk?

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Erin Kenney

Yeah, so the first one definitely is always going to be diet. As a dietitian, you know, it's hard not to start there because the food that we put on our plate at every single meal makes such a big difference in how we feel in terms of our inflammation, in terms of our energy levels and our sleep. It all really, really starts on the plate for me when I talk to clients.

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Erin Kenney

So we focus on balanced meals. We focus on balancing our blood sugar, we focus on diversity, aiming for 30 plant foods per week. We work in certain foods that we know are very protective things like fermented foods. We work on prebiotic foods like onions and garlic and asparagus. We focus on polyphenol rich foods. So diet is really a big bucket that I start with is let's just lay the foundation.

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Erin Kenney

Let's just make sure your meals are balanced. Let's make sure you're getting what you need. And then we move on to lifestyle, which is another huge bucket that we focus on. So I have clients kind of map out what they're doing all day. So what do you do the second that you wake up do you sit and check your phone?

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Erin Kenney

Do you skip breakfast and just eat coffee? Do you you know, you know, what are the habits that you're doing hour by hour. And we just kind of take a bird's eye view and say, how could we maybe shift this a little bit? How could we maybe check your phone 30 minutes after? Or how could we maybe pick up a book 30 minutes before you go to bed instead of, you know, sitting on your laptop and checking email?

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Erin Kenney

How about exercise, right? That's a big lifestyle one. So we talk about simple ways to add and movement to your day. You know, if you're a CEO of a company and you know you have very limited time, take the stairs, you know, walk up the stairs or stand up between meetings and do ten squats, walk down the hall to go get another cup of coffee.

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Erin Kenney

Like just small little habits that we can make every single day. So diet lifestyle. Those are really my two big ones. And then once we have those in, I would say like a good balance, like you feel like you're in a good flow. That's when we start to dive deeper and look at the microbiome. We start to look at more advanced testing and blood testing, things like that.

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Erin Kenney

Make sure you don't have, you know, more overt imbalances like Sibo and yeast overgrowth and H. Pylori. But those foundational buckets are really where I start is diet and lifestyle. And a lot of people are missing the mark on so many of those that, you know, they could seemingly be some of the healthiest people where they feel like they're doing everything right, but, you know, they're just missing.

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Erin Kenney

You're really not getting enough fiber. You know, that salad that you're having every day for lunch isn't really even touching close to the 25 to 30g that I want you to get. So people would be surprised that those buckets tend to be lacking in certain areas. And then then we want to move deeper and we do. There are a lot of times where we move deeper and we find some really, strong imbalances that that made a huge difference in how that person felt.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Well, I love that you brought up fiber, and I want to spend some time talking about fiber. We were chatting before we started going live that we just launched a podcast on like fitness and, strength training and that for women. And one of the things talked about on that podcast was protein and getting enough protein and protein.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And let's, let's take a minute to honor the fact that protein is having its moment. It's definitely like wearing the crown. Everyone's talking about protein and it's so critical. But what you and I were talking about before is that fiber is so essential for so many reasons. And like you mentioned, it's really quite hard. I mean, I eat really well and it can be very hard to get.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

I aim for 35g to 45g a day. That's when I have that. And I sometimes I like occasionally will jump in and track my food and see. It can be hard to get that much fiber in the diet. So let's talk a little bit about fiber and why fiber is such a critical nutrient for people to be focusing on.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Sure.

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Erin Kenney

I like to start with the headline of fiber is not important for you. It's important for your microbes because a lot of people think like, oh, I should eat fiber so that I'll be healthier. And we need to remember that we are more bacteria than we are human cells. Like more back.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Miles. So yeah, like we have more cells of bacteria that we carry around than we have cells of human. That is. Yes, really a cool factoid.

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Erin Kenney

So we can't be selfish, right? We have to remember that those bacteria which make up so much of who we are and our overall health, they are the ones that need the fiber. They are the ones that thrive on this fiber. And when we look at the research and what fiber does right, it supports our metabolic health. It helps reduce our risk for all types of cancers, but especially colon cancer.

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Erin Kenney

It helps to improve our satiety. It helps to improve our bowel regularity. Right. Things like constipation are that alone is a risk factor for colon cancer. Because if you're constipated, that's going to mean that you have more of these toxic compounds sitting and being exposed to colon cells longer. So it helps keep us regular. It helps to support inflammation in the body and in the gut.

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Erin Kenney

So there's so many benefits of what fiber does that we need to remember that it's the bacteria that is really eating it. And then producing these beneficial effects.

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Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

I will never forget. And it's going to be like my life slogan like, don't be selfish, eat your fiber.

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Erin Kenney

It's true though, it's such a great reminder of like, you know, I tell you all the time, you know, when we do your stool test, they're unhappy, they're sad, you have not fed them. And what happens when we don't feed them is that there was a really great study that they did. It was an animal models, a great study in the sense that I love to use it to show people what happens when you don't give these bacteria fiber is that these bacteria need some source of fuel, so they start to actually feed on the mucus layer in your gut and actually eat away at that healthy mucus layer.

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Erin Kenney

So if you don't feed them, they will find something else to feed on. And I promise you, eating the mucus layer in your gut is not a healthy way to go. That is not something that you want to happen, because that layer is going to be the barrier between your gut and your blood, which should be a healthy, selective, selectively permeable barrier.

00:24:59:16 - 00:25:26:21

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah. I mean, I'm definitely not been getting my feel like hitting my fiber goals this summer more just because the busy and like lack of schedule with the kids and all that stuff. So this is really inspiring. So thank you very much for bringing this up. One of the things I think is so tricky, and one of the things I want to talk about is I think that when we talk about fiber and the benefits of fiber, my point of view is that one of the benefits is not even the fact that it is the like, food source for our microbiome.

00:25:26:21 - 00:25:47:06

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And of course it is. You have all these prebiotics in there that fuel the microbiome. But

with fiber also comes this wealth of phytonutrients, because the foods that fiber are found in are also our nutrient dense foods like fruits and vegetables. So or seeds, nuts, like all of these things, we need the things that are around the fiber as well.

00:25:47:08 - 00:26:08:09

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And so that gets the reason why I mentioned that is that fiber supplements, fiber rich foods, people that they get all their fiber from chia seeds or from like, I like this carbonates bread that I always have in my freezer because a slice of it is like nine grams of fiber or lollipop now, and that's kind of like soda that has prebiotic fiber in it.

00:26:08:11 - 00:26:28:07

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

These are great in order to hit a number. But I wonder, and maybe you have what point of view on this? Are they as good as getting fiber from fruits and vegetables? I mean, in what ways are we still getting benefit in what ways are we maybe missing the boat when we take these, like I call them shortcuts, but when we're eating these like fiber supplement types of foods.

00:26:28:09 - 00:26:46:19

Erin Kenney

You know, that's such a great question. And I think it's so important for the listeners to truly understand the difference of what you just said, where, you know, it's it's like extracting a vitamin out of, Apple. Like, let's say you took the vitamin C out of the apple. You're missing out on the quercetin that comes from the skin of the apple, and you're missing out on some of those water soluble vitamins.

00:26:46:19 - 00:27:09:16

Erin Kenney

So you really do want to focus on fiber from whole foods. That's not to say that drinking all pop or, you know, doing something like the carbonate bread is necessarily bad and it doesn't contribute. But the majority of where we want our fiber to come from should be whole, unprocessed foods. The carbonate. I think that's a little bit of an exception in the sense that I do believe they're fiber and there is very much resistant starch.

00:27:09:16 - 00:27:32:20

Erin Kenney

So they do have a good amount of like butyrate producing ingredients in there. But

the way I think of it is like I will see that as like a nice to have. Okay. That's great. Some additional fiber in my like healthy soda that I'm drinking, but I'm still going to try to get my five servings of vegetables per day and my two servings of fruits per day, even if I'm getting that, as long as there's obviously not digestive discomfort.

00:27:32:22 - 00:27:48:08

Erin Kenney

And a lot of the times, you know, those supplements, the fiber supplements, whether they're like gummies or powders or they're added to nutritional bars, they also can cause a lot of digestive symptoms because it's a lot in one serving for some people. And so it's important.

00:27:48:13 - 00:27:53:03

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

If they don't have a good microbiome, like if you're putting it in to a microbiome that's.

00:27:53:05 - 00:27:53:22

Erin Kenney

00:27:54:00 - 00:27:55:23

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

You know, a little bit deficient.

00:27:56:00 - 00:28:22:04

Erin Kenney

Yes, exactly. So my preference is focus on whole foods, sources of fiber. Yes. They come with the phytonutrients, they come with the polyphenols. They come with all these additional benefits. And we have to remember that nature was designed perfectly in certain ways. Right? Nature had intended it to be this way for a reason. And so if we look at, you know, the way that nutrients even come from food, they work together, they work synergistically, they work together to create this benefit.

00:28:22:04 - 00:28:48:00

Erin Kenney

And so trying to isolate something away from food, while it can be beneficial in certain ways, I wouldn't focus on that. Being your primary source of fiber, I would get a diverse range from nuts and seeds and fruits and vegetables and whole grains and,

you know, supplements can be great and they can be important short term, like there are certain cases where clients can not tolerate fermentable fibers, for example, of clients have small intestinal bacterial overgrowth.

00:28:48:05 - 00:29:07:05

Erin Kenney

If clients have, you know, histamine issues and they can't eat fermented foods, there's there's ways that we can supplement, especially in the short term, to help keep their beneficial bacteria thriving, help keep their gut lining thriving. But our goal ultimately is to get them to a place where fiber is coming from food if possible.

00:29:07:06 - 00:29:16:05

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Do you have favorite supplements like inulin or anything like that that are, types of fiber that you prefer or either you recommend people use for supplements?

00:29:16:06 - 00:29:35:04

Erin Kenney

Yes. So inulin, I love inulin. It definitely is. So the a lot of the clients I work with do tend to have bacterial overgrowth. They do tend to have like mix things like that. So most of the supplements that I'm using are like sun fiber is one of my favorite. Yeah, it's partially hydrolyzed guar gum for those who aren't familiar.

00:29:35:06 - 00:29:54:04

Erin Kenney

That's my favorite like gentle non fermentable fiber. So oftentimes I'll use that. Especially if we're doing a protocol where where we have to reduce some harmful bacteria. Can help kind of provide some support. I love psyllium husk for the right type of people. It's great because it can work for both constipation and diarrhea. I love acacia fiber.

00:29:54:04 - 00:30:11:16

Erin Kenney

That's another one that's been really beneficial for clients with constipation. You mentioned inulin. I do like that one a lot. I would say psyllium and sun fiber are probably the two that I use the most, in my practice, because they tend to be the biggest bang for your buck and the best outcomes with minimal symptoms.

00:30:11:18 - 00:30:17:06

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

What about like flax seed, chia seed, hemp seed? Those are others that are I think people are using a lot.

00:30:17:08 - 00:30:40:12

Erin Kenney

Yeah. There's a like there's some blends that I really like. I can't remember the exact brand, but they have a blend of like the acacia, the flax seed. There's even some kiwi fruit, you know, extract in there, which we know is somewhat beneficial, in supplement form. So there are some blends that can be a little bit more gentle, that can provide, more diversity if a client, you know, fits the right profile for what that would look like.

00:30:40:14 - 00:31:07:13

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Ultimately, I love your suggestion of, like, 30 different plant foods a week. I would even push that higher. And I remind people also that like a green apple and a red apple are different plants, right? So I think we can think about that because the phytonutrient profile, even in variations of the same food, make a difference. So like I recommend to people when you're at the grocery store, rather than pick up the 5 pound bag of Fuji apples like make your own blend an assortment of getting like 4 or 5 different types of Apple.

00:31:07:15 - 00:31:12:06

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

That would be the same number or the same price. You know, that you're just kind of mixing it up a little bit.

00:31:12:08 - 00:31:30:16

Erin Kenney

And herbs too, like a lot of people don't like herbs. And I think of plants. Right. Like, add turmeric, add onion and garlic. Make a Italian dish that has rosemary, thyme, oregano. Make a Indian dish that has, fenugreek. And, you know, you can literally just spice it up. And that alone can make a huge difference.

00:31:30:16 - 00:31:57:08

Erin Kenney

And we know from research that herbs like thyme, oregano, incredible polyphenol rich foods, incredible anti-inflammatory effects in the gut, you know, so incorporating

those is a really, I would say simple way because it doesn't even require you to, you know, add a ton of bulk to your grocery haul. These are things you might already have in your cabinet that you're like, I only use garlic and onion, and I should maybe branch out and try some new, you know, spice flavors.

00:31:57:10 - 00:32:20:18

DUTCH Podcast

We'll be right back with more results. Start with easy collection. The DUTCH test can help you identify the root cause of complex patient concerns, and you can ship DUTCH test kits directly to your patients for easy at home collection that fits into your workflow. Scan the code to learn more, or find the link in the show notes to place your order today.

00:32:20:20 - 00:32:23:14

DUTCH Podcast

Welcome back to the DUTCH podcast.

00:32:23:16 - 00:32:39:11

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

So I think Thinking Outside the Box, one of my favorite handouts that I would give to patients is actually, like when they were prepping for pregnancy, I would have like green, yellow and red kind of food. Groups of like Eat This less than twice a week, you know, and the green was like, eat as much as you can.

00:32:39:12 - 00:32:58:19

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And on the green it was all the different plant foods, of course, but it was pages and pages long, intentionally. I included everything that I could think of on there because I wanted people to sense the abundance of just how much is out there. And maybe when you look, you're like, oh, like kohlrabi. I've never had kohlrabi. Or there's just such cool things.

00:32:58:19 - 00:33:15:17

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And if you have children or another favorite thing that I've done is we'll do like an eat the rainbow chart on the fridge for the family. But take your kids to the grocery store and say, we don't have anything purple. What can you find that's purple? Because if they pick up the eggplant, they'd be more likely to eat it if they're the one in charge of choosing it.

00:33:15:17 - 00:33:28:02

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

So getting your kids involved with that, and they might pick up things that you're not normally choosing as well. So yeah, it can be really fun to kind of increase that, the exposure to new different kinds of foods.

00:33:28:04 - 00:33:53:21

Erin Kenney

Yeah. As a mom of a toddler and a four month old, that that is so true. And, you know, getting my daughter involved in the kitchen has made a huge difference in her acceptability of the foods. And, you know, even just like confidence in the kitchen, too, it's so fun. Fun to watch. But one of my favorite things that I see in practice is when my clients who are parents start to eat better and fuel their bodies better, their kids start to do the same thing.

00:33:53:21 - 00:34:09:12

Erin Kenney

And it's funny because I've worked with, you know, some clients who are like, oh yeah, my kid's really picky. My kid won't eat that. And then all of a sudden they start eating it and then they're saying, oh, my son just ate it, or my daughter just picked this up. And then she keep now she's eating my yogurt bowl with Kiwi.

00:34:09:12 - 00:34:31:18

Erin Kenney

And you know, so so we have to remember that we are also influencing these generations behind us. And that's a tool for prevention as well. As, you know, what you're doing is setting the tone for that. And some of the tools that you mentioned are so wonderful because, you know, kids can be tough to feed sometimes, and you need to get a little creative on how you, you know, have them explore and experience the foods.

00:34:31:20 - 00:34:47:04

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Definitely. I mean, I have five kids at home, 7 to 17. So oh my gosh, you've been through this quite a lot. And I will say it gets really hard. Like when they're very young and you're controlling everything that's in their lunchbox and that's, you know, something about preschool or what they're eating in the home. It gets really easy.

00:34:47:04 - 00:35:05:16

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

But then as they get older and they're out of the house more and they're making their own choices, and let's face it, the choices are really not great. When I mean, even in schools, we live in Massachusetts, we've got great programs with great social support programs, but when I see what the kids take home, they always have a fresh fruit or vegetable.

00:35:05:21 - 00:35:22:06

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

But then I, like the kids, wanted to go to school for breakfast. They've offer free breakfast before school, and then one day that my son hadn't eaten his breakfast and it was like Cocoa Puffs or whatever, and I'm like, oh, this is why you want to go to breakfast? Because they give you things that you don't get at home, right?

00:35:22:06 - 00:35:37:20

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah. And there's a lot to food. I mean, just a funny one more funny story on that with my teenager. He was not having friends at our house. And we've got a really fun house for friends and foosball and like, a gaming table and blah, blah, blah. And so I asked one day, Monty, why are you not having friends over?

00:35:37:20 - 00:35:57:10

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Like, you know, are welcome to have people over after school? And he's like, well, you know, can I be honest with you? And I'm like, yes, please be honest with me. And he said, your snacks suck. He said, my friends, they don't want to come over and have like plain Greek yogurt and and, and anyway and grapes and whatever.

00:35:57:10 - 00:36:11:20

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And he's like and so we do buy Cheez-Its and Oreos and we buy that stuff because we think about the whole person in that. Right? We think, like for building a community, you know, we want that we have soda in the house now where we never did before. But my kids also, they they come back around. That's my point.

00:36:12:00 - 00:36:27:16

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

They eat that when they're out, but when they're home they'll drink spindrift or

seltzer water or water. Just plain water. And they eat the food that we serve for dinner, you know, so they get picky, but they swing back around. And I think you're right. The habits that your parents set impact have a big positive impact on food.

00:36:27:18 - 00:36:44:22

Erin Kenney

Well, and like you said, like it's hard as a parent nowadays to you want to have you want to have your children have a healthy relationship with food. But you also have to understand, like the food choices that we have and the ones that are most prevalent in these like settings of even very young children at school are not great options.

00:36:44:22 - 00:37:00:19

Erin Kenney

You know, we can acknowledge that we're grateful to have access, but we also can do better. Right? Yeah. So I think that the healthy relationship with food, I told the story on my Instagram story the other day about they were offering their ice cream truck, come to my daughter's school and we don't do added sugars for two year old.

00:37:00:19 - 00:37:14:14

Erin Kenney

That's not in our practice. And she said, you know, we noticed you didn't bring money for her ice cream. And I said, well, is every other kid in the class going to get it? Or is it just like, you know, certain kids are going to attend? And she said, everyone's getting it. I said, well, if that's the case, absolutely.

00:37:14:14 - 00:37:28:08

Erin Kenney

I don't want my daughter to be the only one in the room not getting ice cream. And that as a two year old, you can only imagine the tantrum that could lead to. But, you know, it's it is. It's that balance of like, you want them to participate in the world and be social and understand that food is more than just fuel.

00:37:28:08 - 00:37:35:13

Erin Kenney

But we also, you know, we want to make those choices that are supporting their health and growth and development and future health as well.

00:37:35:15 - 00:37:57:08

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

It can be eye opening, though, to see what's normalized when it comes to food for children. And, I think this is something that really gets me thinking about this younger prevalence of colorectal cancer is that the people who are you know, we were the children. I'm 40, 46 almost. But like convenience foods started when I was young.

00:37:57:08 - 00:38:14:12

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Like it was like the era of the Lean Cuisine, right? I would have a Lean Cuisine for lunch a lot, because it was easy to put in the microwave and heat up. And when my parents were working, I could do that. And but we only ate great food too. I had I mean, let's not misrepresent my parents are going to listen to this and then say we had home cooked meals every day, which we did.

00:38:14:13 - 00:38:38:11

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

But, my point is, our food has predominantly changed from like what our grandparents ate every day so significantly and even things that are prepared now in a restaurant because takeout is so prevalent, they're put in plastic containers and then people take them home and eat them and it just makes me think about, and I'd love you to comment on these hyper processed foods that we now see and think.

00:38:38:11 - 00:39:05:11

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

The majority of foods in the supermarket are ultra processed. And not only that, but then I think about the takeout culture and hot food and plastic containers. And I'd love you to comment on the impact about on the microbiome and of course, we don't know. But when you think about the direct exposure of microplastics or nano plastics in the stomach, in the lining of the intestines because you're literally eating these foods, I imagine that could have an impact on those cancer rates because the cells are in contact.

00:39:05:11 - 00:39:13:08

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

But even if we put that aside because I think the data is not clear, what about microbiome for ultra processed foods? And for like all the plastics were exposed to?

00:39:13:10 - 00:39:37:06

Erin Kenney

Yeah, definitely. I mean, like you said, that we do have research that shows that

microplastics do influence the gut. And by influencing the gut in a negative way, you're creating a more hospitable environment for cancer to grow or for a tumor to grow. Right. Another thing we know is that, you know, patients with inflammatory bowel disease have a much higher risk for colon cancer just because they have, especially if it's uncontrolled.

00:39:37:06 - 00:40:04:11

Erin Kenney

They have this chronic inflammation, it's long term inflammation. And so this isn't like you had inflammation for a week and then it went away. Patients with inflammatory bowel disease they have this constant immune dysregulation. They have this constant disruption to the gut barrier and shifts in the microbiome. And so when we look at the the ingredients in certain foods, as someone who very, very much is passionate about inflammatory bowel disease, a lot of my clients have IBD.

00:40:04:13 - 00:40:24:18

Erin Kenney

You know, when we look at ingredients in highly processed foods, we look at carbo methyl cellulose, we look at polysorbate 80. When we look at these gums that are being added, these thickeners, industrial thickeners. We have not great human studies but some great animal studies that across the board are showing that they're going to increase inflammation in the gut.

00:40:24:20 - 00:40:49:18

Erin Kenney

You know, these are very common additives that are added to processed foods. And by increasing low grade inflammation and even someone without inflammatory bowel disease, we are creating a more hospitable environment for cancer to grow. And so it's not about never picking up a processed food, but it's about understanding, you know, it's in a lot of these foods nowadays, like we're adding thickeners, people are eating gluten free, and then they're thinking that's healthier.

00:40:49:18 - 00:41:11:21

Erin Kenney

And then that adds a whole host of different added ingredients. When we go out to eat, there's so many additives and what they're adding there to make things more shelf stable, even like these like health food items, right? Oh, proteins in popcorn now and proteins in this now. And you know, so people are intrigued by the headline of the protein or intrigued by the headline of low fat or high fiber.

00:41:12:02 - 00:41:51:07

Erin Kenney

But when you turn around the label, that ingredients list is starting to get really long. And, you know, we just we see these these additives in these ingredients that are associated with increased levels of inflammation, disruption in the gut barrier function and disruption in the balance of healthy and more opportunistic bacteria in the gut. So, you know, my recommendation always is like keep the ingredients as simple as possible when you can and make those processed foods a much smaller percentage of your diet that 8020 rule clients really like to, you know, view that in the the pie chart of their diet.

00:41:51:07 - 00:42:13:05

Erin Kenney

Of 80% of the time I'm eating really good, healthy, unprocessed foods, and then 20% of the time, I'm not going to stress about some more of my fun foods that are going to be part of my diet. But we we aren't going to say that carbo methyl cellulose is the cause of colon cancer, but in combination with everything else, it's creating a more, inflammatory environment.

00:42:13:05 - 00:42:15:23

Erin Kenney

If these things are making up the majority of what we're eating.

00:42:16:04 - 00:42:32:23

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah, it's probably slowed down our understanding because any one of those things on its own probably wouldn't be enough to turn the tide of cancer. So then they get tested and said, okay, it's actually not that bad. It's only a minor impact. But the problem is that total load of all of these small things added together that you trim.

00:42:32:23 - 00:42:46:16

Erin Kenney

You lose the bucket. Yeah, the bucket might use like I to like to tell clients as a visual, like look at your bucket as a whole. Like look at all the things that are contributing to inflammation overall in the gut. And let's see if we can start to pull those away.

00:42:46:18 - 00:43:13:10

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

So you're bringing me to like a really practical question. And I just think when you talk about how difficult it can be to read a label and know if a food is good for you or not, is there a practical advice that your patients really understand or that you give them? I love the one of like as few ingredients as possible, but for people who maybe need a little bit more convenience, and they, you know, are learning to read labels and they want to look for foods that are high in fiber, high in protein, etc..

00:43:13:16 - 00:43:14:23

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

What tips do you give them?

00:43:14:23 - 00:43:37:17

Erin Kenney

So one that I really like, especially when it comes to limiting added sugars. I see this a lot with like snack bars and protein bars and stuff like that, or even just snacks. Is if you add up the protein plus the fiber, if that's greater than the added sugar, then it's generally a better option. So that's a really great way to reduce added sugars and optimize both fiber and protein at the same time.

00:43:37:17 - 00:43:56:12

Erin Kenney

Like obviously that can vary, but it's like a nice little tip that they can use at the grocery store. I also like clients to focus on if it's a meal, then it should contain at least five grams of fiber, ideally coming from whole food sources. And the way that you can tell that is looking at the order of the ingredients that are listed on the label.

00:43:56:12 - 00:44:15:07

Erin Kenney

So I tell clients, you know, they'll say, oh, I shouldn't have eaten this because it's got this. And it's like, okay, but it's the last ingredient on the list. If the first ingredient is spinach or the first ingredient is oats, that's a really good, high fiber, high quality food source. So you know that the majority of what's in that food is that first ingredient.

00:44:15:07 - 00:44:33:12

Erin Kenney

And so if the last ingredient is, you know, something like sugar and there's five other ingredients before it, that's definitely a better choice than something that has sugar listed as a second ingredient. So that's how I like clients to look at the labels and look at the nutrition facts. Of course, I'm also recommending focusing on protein, too.

00:44:33:12 - 00:44:53:03

Erin Kenney

I'm a personal trainer. I understand the importance of muscle mass and metabolic health. So as a guide, I tell clients, you know, anywhere from 25 to 30g of protein minimum at each meal. When it comes to fat sources, we want to be mindful of saturated fats. You know where the saturated fat is coming from that can increase your risk for more inflammation in the gut.

00:44:53:03 - 00:45:18:07

Erin Kenney

If you're overdoing it on the saturated fats and also thinking of cardiovascular disease. So we just want to be mindful of more whole food sources of saturated fats versus, you know, things like, highly refined, processed fats and things like that. And so less than 10% of your daily calories from from saturated fats generally, looking for sources like avocado oil, olive oil, nuts and seeds, things like that.

00:45:18:09 - 00:45:21:22

Erin Kenney

Can be can also be really beneficial to focus on too.

00:45:22:00 - 00:45:37:20

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

That's super helpful. Do you have any favorite convenience foods that are great to recommend? Like, I know one of the things I love is at a bar called Raw Rev Glow that you have to serve online. It's hard to find, but they're like whole foods based, high in fiber, not too high in fat because some of these are just like all nuts.

00:45:37:22 - 00:45:39:21

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Anything. They are your faves.

00:45:39:23 - 00:45:46:01

Erin Kenney

Yeah, I like, so I get a lot of questions about frozen meals. Like you mentioned, the what was it, the smart choice or smart balance? Something like that.

00:45:46:01 - 00:45:51:04

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Lean cuisine, it's like the it was like, the meal of the 90s or the 80s.

00:45:51:04 - 00:46:12:23

Erin Kenney

So I really like, Kevin's like Kevin's is a great brand. Really, really simple ingredients. That is at, I would say, a lot of Meijer grocery stores, even places like target. Another one like Daily Harvest. They've done a really good job. Like really simplifying things and making it easier to get more vegetables. And they do frozen items now.

00:46:13:04 - 00:46:27:12

Erin Kenney

And I actually tried a lot of them. They sent me a box to try and what I love about the daily harvest ones is that you get most of the veggies, but they are really lacking on protein. So you can just add like chicken or, you know, beef or eggs or salmon or something like that to the meal.

00:46:27:12 - 00:46:47:16

Erin Kenney

When you get a lot of plant diversity in those meals. I love the bars that you're talking about. Equip just came out with some new bars. I use the, protein powder that's we like the beef isolate protein, and they just came out with some bars that are really simple dates and, a little bit of beef tallow and equip, protein powder, which is just beef isolate.

00:46:47:16 - 00:47:15:05

Erin Kenney

Those are really simple, nutrient dense bars. And then, you know, for snacks, I'm telling clients like, you know, nuts and seeds and, you know, things like that sounds silly, but like pork rinds, you know, things like that that are very minimal ingredients but can still offer the similar nutritional value. Yeah. We shouldn't shy away from convenience completely, because if we're being realistic, we we live in a world where it's pretty fast paced and we don't have time to be, you know, in the kitchen for hours.

00:47:15:07 - 00:47:31:14

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Absolutely. And I think, like, I always think about getting it to be like shades of better rather than perfect. Like there's a good, better and a best, right? The best might be to have the whole fresh food, but sometimes it's okay to do good. Like one example is with food prep. A meal prep for me like it's super busy.

00:47:31:18 - 00:47:52:17

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

We have my husband while I'm alone now working, I come home, I have kids that need to be fed, go to their after school activities were all over the place so it can really be tricky sometimes to prep a meal. So buying bagged vegetables that are already cut up and washed, that saves me a couple of minutes and sometimes that is what gets people to be able to do it.

00:47:52:17 - 00:47:55:08

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

So don't be afraid of that. Yeah.

00:47:55:10 - 00:48:11:00

Erin Kenney

We are. We're in that stage of life right now where my grocery shop, like I used to buy, like the carrots that I would chuck, and this and that and like, now sometimes it's like, all right, buy the ones that have. At least they've cut the tops off and washed them. And then, you know, you can just take take some of the stress off of yourself.

00:48:11:00 - 00:48:31:08

Erin Kenney

So that you can still eat healthily. And also, you know, be able to sit down and enjoy a meal with your family. And I 100% agree we have to be realistic about, you know, what's going to be. And healthy can mean different things, right? It can mean that it's allowing you to live a certain lifestyle and be part of, you know, a family meal or something like that.

00:48:31:10 - 00:48:47:18

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah. And I think if it's, like if it's frozen, fine, you know, just like, do the best that you can do one trick that I that's really changed the game for me on fiber, because I think one of the biggest problems is people get very little fiber at breakfast. You're typically looking at like kind of bread type of products or cereal, things that are not so rich.

00:48:47:18 - 00:49:05:22

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

But my breakfast every morning is pretty much I'll buy different vegetables, cut them all up. Sometimes I'll even saute them all in one big batch, and then I'll eat it

throughout the week, which I would prefer to cook it fresh. But if you don't have time to grind, cooking them can make it easier. But then I'll be getting massive amounts of fiber where I just I'll throw the eggs in.

00:49:06:00 - 00:49:22:06

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

I mean, throw the veggies in a pan, whatever I have for that week. And then I crack a couple eggs, mix it up, add some hot sauce. It's functional. It's actually quite good, but you end up getting this front loaded fiber, which also helps you feel full through the day and balanced. And anyway, that's a really good tip for me.

00:49:22:08 - 00:49:25:09

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

That really helped me get some more fiber at breakfast.

00:49:25:11 - 00:49:47:11

Erin Kenney

That's awesome. I've in the past few weeks I've been loving making like a little chia pudding that I use almost as a topping to. So I make a lot of like protein pancakes. You like sweet potato? Protein pancakes. We do banana ones and stuff. And then so I just mix a little bit of chia seed and sometimes a flax blend as well, and just mix it with coconut milk and sometimes can add berries to it.

00:49:47:11 - 00:50:05:03

Erin Kenney

And you can just throw that on top of waffles. You can throw it on top of oats. You could have it as a side to something like what you're talking about with eggs. Or you could have it as a snack. But I agree. Like I tend to see clients struggle the most at breakfast. And, you know, it's it's there's little, you know, little tips like that that you can really boost, boost the total amount that you're getting.

00:50:05:03 - 00:50:17:08

Erin Kenney

And you do want to spread throughout the day because like we talked about, getting added fiber is good. But if you're especially if you're new to adding in fiber, you don't want to be, you know, throwing in 30g at breakfast. You want to spread it out throughout the day.

00:50:17:10 - 00:50:36:14

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Definitely the chia pudding, too. That's another one where I've been adding a scoop of protein powder, like into the thing of chia pudding. When I mix it, I'll like shake it with the milk and then I add all the other ingredients. So otherwise you get to mix and make that mistake more than one. But that's another great way that you can again add fiber and protein, get a good easy breakfast.

00:50:36:15 - 00:51:00:16

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

It's great. Well, I, I do want to talk about hormones because we're a hormone podcast. Yes. And and I think it's not always a natural fit for people to think about hormones and hormone testing when it comes to colorectal cancer risk. But we know that, like estrogen impacts the gut health, cortisol impacts gut health. How do you think hormonal patterns play a role in a patient's long term cancer risk conversation?

00:51:00:18 - 00:51:05:07

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Do you really marry those in your practice, or do you really keep them separate from gut health?

00:51:05:09 - 00:51:25:12

Erin Kenney

I don't think we we can't keep them separate from gut health because they really are intertwined, you know, similar to everything we've been talking about. You know, it's not like a it's not like a breast cancer where we know that they're estrogen dominant breast cancers. We do see some differences in, in females who develop colorectal cancer versus males in terms of some different immune signaling.

00:51:25:14 - 00:51:47:02

Erin Kenney

But we really can't separate the two. Because they are very much connected. Your hormones play a role in the diversity of the bacteria in your gut. Your hormones play a role in the integrity. So that gut lining that we've reflected on several times, they play a role in motility. So how quickly or how slowly things move through your gut.

00:51:47:02 - 00:52:09:03

Erin Kenney

And so when I'm working with clients in the DUTCH test, you know, there's a lot of things that we see on the DUTCH tests that align with what we also start to see with

their gut symptoms, things like Sibo, things like slow motility, constipation, you know, there's so much overlap there that I certainly wouldn't ever separate the two.

00:52:09:05 - 00:52:29:14

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

That mentioned the of how hormones change that gut microbiome is really fascinating because like during pregnancy, for example, the microbiome loses diversity and looks like more of like a leaky gut, which is fascinating because you think about maybe it is intended to be leaky. So we just maximize nutrient absorption during that time where you have a higher need, you're growing a human.

00:52:29:16 - 00:52:38:10

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

And also that you just post-menopausal where like the female gut starts to change to look more like the male gut. I mean, it's so fascinating. There's so much interesting, fascinating.

00:52:38:12 - 00:53:02:09

Erin Kenney

I, I wrote a Pregnancy Gut Healthy Pregnancy guide to help clients who have like Sibo and reflux and stuff like that during pregnancy. And through my work of that book, I learned so much about like histamine and stuff, like the Dao enzyme and what happens and all that stuff. I, I just would love to talk to whoever created the female body because it's just fascinating.

00:53:02:11 - 00:53:25:00

Erin Kenney

But yeah, I use the DUTCH test a lot in practice to really understand, you know, estrogen pathways. And that is a big one. Like, we talk about the a strobe alone. So the strobe alone is a collection of gut bacteria that help regulate how our body is actually processing estrogen, which is really important, when it comes to are things like inflammation and motility.

00:53:25:01 - 00:53:44:11

Erin Kenney

So that is a really, really helpful tool for us and how we develop a protocol for clients. Also looking at in the can the organic acids that can give us ideas of whether a client might have Sibo, small intestinal bacterial overgrowth. We look at the cortisol patterns, right. Not just a one time blood level of cortisol like you might get at your

doctors.

00:53:44:11 - 00:54:08:11

Erin Kenney

We're looking at the diurnal patterns and seeing how you know what levels of stress might be really influencing a client's intestinal barrier, because high levels of cortisol can basically damage that gut barrier, especially over time with chronic stress. So there's a lot of connections that we make. And it really helps to create a holistic view of how a client's protocol is packaged together.

00:54:08:13 - 00:54:32:12

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

I love that you mentioned cortisol because I think people don't. They think about digest as like estrogen and progesterone, androgens. Cortisol is a really critical piece of the digest from my point of view. It's because it's the foundation that all of our other hormones really sit on. Right? So critically important. But, you know, I feel like chronic stress and high cortisol get a lot of attention in the hormone space, but not as much in colon health and not as much in cancer.

00:54:32:14 - 00:54:44:21

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

There's a lot of research out there, though, like when you and I love that you brought this up earlier on the podcast, that when you're under a sustained stress that can play a role in gut barrier function and inflammation, can you touch upon that a little bit more?

00:54:45:00 - 00:55:06:23

Erin Kenney

Yeah. So, so short term stress use stress is good right. We we always want to hit home. Like our goal is not to avoid cortisol. But when you have chronically high levels or dysregulated levels of cortisol, what that can do is it can slowly break down the gut lining and create inflammation in our gut, which is creating what we call leaky.

00:55:06:23 - 00:55:27:23

Erin Kenney

Got that intestinal permeability. So we we were talking about this in relation to food sensitivities. So we see this with food sensitivities where clients will be chronically stressed and they're not managing their nervous system well and their cortisol levels are dysregulated. Maybe chronically high maybe chronically high at night. And then

we start to see clients with leaky gut intestinal permeability issues.

00:55:28:01 - 00:55:51:20

Erin Kenney

So it is it is. And I've seen clients the only thing that we've worked on was stress management and nervous system and circadian rhythm. And that alone was able to help clients heal their gut. So I've seen it firsthand in practice many different times, and it was a huge part of even healing my own gut. I really did not address that stress component of my life, and that was preventing me from actually healing for the long term.

00:55:52:00 - 00:56:17:06

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Yeah, it's so interesting because, you know, we always think about like the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems and that fight or flight in the parasympathetic is rest and digest and you need that parasympathetic innervation. So if you're eating on the go or you're eating, you know, while you're so stressed out, you're eating too fast, you know, it's like when you or you're eating and working or I always told my patients, when you're eating, that's the activity.

00:56:17:06 - 00:56:37:16

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

It's going to be eating and doing something else. And sometimes it's as simple as taking a couple deep breaths before you eat or like focusing on chewing and tasting your food. These things can make such a big difference for people, because you need that relaxation response to actually produce the enzymes and produce the secretions that assist with digestion as well.

00:56:37:18 - 00:57:03:05

Erin Kenney

Yeah, I work with a lot of clients who have reflux as well. And the simple act of that diaphragmatic belly breathing that you just talked about, where you're just taking three deep belly breaths before your meal that simply can change the entire abdominal pressure, reducing reflux symptoms. And there's good research to show this. You know, I tell clients when you're exercising, your blood moves away from your gut, and that's why you don't want to be digesting while you're working out.

00:57:03:05 - 00:57:18:21

Erin Kenney

And it's the same thing when you're in that fight or flight mode, as you can kind of think of it like you're working out, you're being chased by a tiger. You said, like you just said, you're not going to optimize your digestive function. Your body's not going to be able to do what it should be doing. And so I talked to clients about this oscillation.

00:57:18:23 - 00:57:36:15

Erin Kenney

You have a period of stress. You get into rest, have a period of stress, you get into rest. It's not about avoiding that fight or flight mode. It's good to have that when you're exercising. It's good to have that when you're in a really important meeting or giving a big presentation. But you have to be able to oscillate in and out of that state in order for your gut to have a chance to recover.

00:57:36:15 - 00:57:39:21

Erin Kenney

In order for your body to have a chance to recover.

00:57:39:23 - 00:58:01:06

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

So critically important. Well, I think my last question for you is really just kind of pulling this all together. Yeah, because I think about especially people under 50 who are not going through routine screening, which is our standard of care of like when that colonoscopy would kick in. What do you think are the most important signs and symptoms for younger people to watch for in their gut?

00:58:01:06 - 00:58:13:10

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

That would say, okay, we really need to be thinking about colon cancer here or a risk of colon cancer. And then I'd love to know if someone wanted to take their colon health seriously. And let's talk about someone in their 30s. What would you tell them to do?

00:58:13:15 - 00:58:35:17

Erin Kenney

So some of the symptoms that are the biggest red flags to me, where I'm always saying, please bring this to your gastroenterologist, do further testing. Number one is blood in the stool. Blood in the stool always warrants further investigation. Sure. It could just be hemorrhoids. Sure. It could just be menstrual bleeding, you know,

spotting something like that. But any blood in the stool, go talk to your gastroenterologist.

00:58:35:19 - 00:58:56:05

Erin Kenney

Second one is narrowing of the stools, especially if that's not your typical, another one would be chronic anemia. So your iron levels are low and you've pretty much checked the board on everything you could possibly do. You're eating high quality iron sources. You're not, you know, a high endurance athlete. You don't have super heavy menstrual periods, but still your iron levels are super low.

00:58:56:05 - 00:59:21:18

Erin Kenney

That's something that we'd want to assess for. Pain, having diarrhea in the middle of the night. It's waking you up in the middle of the night. Any sort of digestive changes, pain, narrowing of the stool, diarrhea things like that. That especially are not your typical. Those shouldn't be happening anyway. Those are not normal. But especially if you're noticing a shift in those things, you should go to your gastroenterologist and let them know that this is going on.

00:59:21:18 - 00:59:32:13

Erin Kenney

But those are kind of my biggest ones. Narrowing of the stool, anemia, blood in the stool, pain, diarrhea, any sort of change outside of your typical bowel movements that last over a few weeks.

00:59:32:18 - 00:59:41:06

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Okay, great. And so what advice would you give someone when they, if they really want to take their colon health more seriously? One of the first things that someone should do.

00:59:41:08 - 01:00:05:06

Erin Kenney

So I love to talk about short chain fatty acids. So short chain fatty acids are the fuel for your colon cells. I think of them like these nice little anti-inflammatory molecules that go in and just nourish those cells in the colon to help prevent your risk. So sources of resistant starches, in your food are what are going to increase the production of butyrate because they feed the bacteria that produce that compound.

01:00:05:08 - 01:00:23:13

Erin Kenney

So think resistant starches, so green bananas cooked in cold rice, cooked in cold potatoes, beans, you know, overnight oats, things like that. Those are all great sources of resistant starch. You can also just grab green banana flour, add like a few teaspoons to your smoothie or baked goods. That's also a great way to get it in. Fermented foods.

01:00:23:13 - 01:00:50:22

Erin Kenney

Wildly underrated. There's a great Stanford study that highlights the incredible benefits of fermented foods and reducing inflammation. So fermented foods is going to be, you know, sauerkraut, kimchi. There's a great brand locally called fermented. A real pickles or something. And fermented pickles, fermented beets, carrots, any true fermented food kefir. Those are going to reduce your risk of inflammation in the colon.

01:00:50:22 - 01:01:10:19

Erin Kenney

And research shows that, wonderfully in, human studies, another one would be to make sure that you're getting at least 30g of fiber per day. That's a minimum for most people. Obviously there are cases where people have gut imbalances, where they can't tolerate that address those so that you can get to a point where your fiber intake can be at least 30.

01:01:10:21 - 01:01:35:13

Erin Kenney

From a lifestyle perspective, move your body. It doesn't have to look perfectly, but move your body throughout the day. Avoid sitting all day, get up. Walk, go. Do some strength training. That's available to you. Incorporate cardiovascular activities. So generally your lifestyle should be one in which incorporates, a consistent level of physical activity. And then another one would be to stop smoking.

01:01:35:13 - 01:02:02:16

Erin Kenney

If you're smoking, that is a huge risk factor for colon cancer. Reduce your alcohol intake. I don't care how much it is. You know, any amount that you can reduce from where you're at now is going to reduce that. And then if you are obese or have a lot of

visceral adiposity. So a lot of, visceral fat in your abdominal area, you know, work with a registered dietitian to, you know, get to a place, a personal trainer, get to a place where you can reduce that as well.

01:02:02:16 - 01:02:20:18

Erin Kenney

And optimize your muscle mass. So those are kind of my big heavy hitters. You know, diet is incredibly important, as I mentioned. So butyrate, resistant starches, fermented foods we already talked about, like minimizing ultra processed foods. And then some of those lifestyle habits as well.

01:02:20:20 - 01:02:31:00

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

I love that. And the way you can like stack habits to get these things into your day is great. Like get in the habit of doing kimchi on top of your salad or on the side of your plate, things like that. I love that.

01:02:31:00 - 01:02:46:22

Erin Kenney

I mean, my husband and I literally just take a fork like before meals and we'll go eat some sauerkraut and just see it as like a supplement at the beginning of our meals. So if you're struggling with ways to incorporate it, know that you could just view it as a supplement even. And you know, there's there are great ways to incorporate fermented foods.

01:02:46:22 - 01:02:51:10

Erin Kenney

But if you're struggling, just put have a tablespoon of it before you go in and have your meal.

01:02:51:16 - 01:03:06:07

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Another one that I do is I take my supplements with Kiefer every day. So, because I have trouble swallowing pills anyway. And it's like thick. So I find it easier to swallow pills that way. And I, I get like, you know, 3 to 4oz of it in the morning and then 3 to 4oz later in the day.

01:03:06:07 - 01:03:16:23

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

So there are ways that you can just kind of sneak it in. I love that one. I also love fermented foods. I'm like such a weirdo. My kids are like, what's that smell? Amazing. Yeah, I've got.

01:03:17:00 - 01:03:35:02

Erin Kenney

I've got this book all about fermenting because I am slightly obsessed with it. And it's cheap, right? Like you can ferment vegetables on your own for, you know, \$0.30. And you know, it's it's a incredible benefit for your gut health. So, yeah, I, I am also one of those weirdos that loves fermented foods. But yeah, your gut is what loves them.

01:03:35:02 - 01:03:39:18

Erin Kenney

Remember, don't be selfish. Your gut loves the fermented foods. So it's not all about what you want.

01:03:39:20 - 01:03:52:22

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Don't be selfish. You're feeding a community here. Yeah, well, Erin, this has been awesome. I've loved our conversation. I think the listeners probably got so much out of it. If people want to follow you, learn more how to work with you. What are the best ways for them to connect?

01:03:53:00 - 01:04:19:23

Erin Kenney

Yeah, so everything is nutrition rewired. So my website nutritionrewired.com. You can contact me there. I'm on social media, mostly Instagram at Nutrition Rewired and feel free to shoot me an email Erin at [NutritionRewired.com](mailto:Erin@NutritionRewired.com) would love to connect with you, but it's been such a pleasure, coming on here today. I'm incredibly passionate about the topic of gut health and helping individuals understand and empower them to take control of of their health.

01:04:20:00 - 01:04:35:11

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Well, thanks again and thank you guys for listening. I know you probably got so much out of the show. I have a whole page of notes that I've been taking to. I want to remind you, if you love conversations like this about health and wellness and of course, hormones, I encourage you to subscribe to the dads podcast anywhere you're listening right now.

01:04:35:11 - 01:04:43:17

Dr. Jaclyn Smeaton

Really easy. Just go ahead and click subscribe and you can follow us AG test on all the socials. I look forward to seeing you next Tuesday.

01:04:43:19 - 01:04:56:20

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