

# Beet Kvass and Gut Health

## Commentary

The National Institutes of Health estimates that 70 million Americans suffer from digestive diseases each year, such as Crohn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and ulcerative colitis [1]. Many people may not be diagnosed with digestive disease but nevertheless have symptoms of an unhealthy digestive system, such as:

- Indigestion
- Constipation
- Abdominal pain
- Food intolerances
- Bloating and excess gas
- Mental and physical fatigue
- An unhealthy immune system

Doctors like Dr. Joseph Mercola and Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride, author of GAPS "Gut and Psychology Syndrome", understand that healing the gut is crucial to overall health and well-being. They believe that most disease, mental and physical, originates in your digestive system [2]. They have helped countless patients to "heal and seal" their damaged gut lining and have noticed that disease symptoms will typically resolve.

## How Do I Join the Movement to Restore Intestinal Health?

Dr. Campbell-McBride recommends that her patients incorporate fermented foods and beverages like Creative Cultures' beet kvass into their daily diet. Lacto-fermented foods and drinks are rich in bioavailable nutrients, enzymes, antioxidants, and probiotics and support many aspects of gut healing and full-body health.

Beet kvass is one of the best natural sources of antioxidants, which are molecules that heal your cells and protect them from damage [3]. It even stimulates your own body's production of these crucial protective compounds, helping to reverse the DNA and tissue damage caused by toxins, inflammation, and other environmental stressors [3]. Additionally, it significantly decreases inflammation in the body, a key part of breaking the vicious cycle of intestinal damage and dysbiosis [3]. Beet kvass, as a fermented drink, is also teeming with beneficial bacteria that help protect the gut and produce important enzymes that aid digestion.

Due to its many benefits, beet kvass has made a huge difference for many people suffering from mild to moderate gastrointestinal discomfort. However, this simple dietary addition may not be enough for those with more serious issues like chronic constipation, diarrhea, severe abdominal pain, and chronic fatigue. Significant changes to the diet may be necessary to fully heal the gut and regain healthy digestion, energy levels, and a true sense of well-being.

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Dr. Campbell-McBride recommends eliminating highly processed and refined foods, sugars, and excess carbs and starches in your diet and incorporating healthy organic foods that are rich in fiber and nutrients. She also offers an introduction diet for those who have been diagnosed with a digestive disease [4].

If you want to feel better, but not yet ready to start Dr. Campbell-McBride's GAPS diet, most digestive specialists recommend starting with eliminating the following foods:

- All foods containing gluten (wheat, barley, rye, spelt, oats, etc. Check labels and avoid processed foods, as they frequently contain wheat/gluten.)
- Sugar (especially refined sugars, such as sucrose, fructose dextrose, maltose, high fructose corn syrup, evaporated cane juice, fruit juice concentrates. If you choose to eat processed foods, which isn't recommended, check the label for these hidden ingredients and look at the sugar content per serving.)
- Dairy (non-fermented)
- Any food that you know you have an intolerance or allergy to. (Try an elimination diet if you aren't sure! See the University of Wisconsin Integrative Medicine guide to elimination diets [5].)

## Why is a Healthy Gut so Important for our Overall Well-Being?

A healthy intestine is directly linked to a healthy body. The gut lining is incredibly important for digestion, immunity, and overall health. It acts as the barrier between your body and the food you eat, which, in addition to nutrients and beneficial bacteria, can carry toxins, pathogens, and inflammatory compounds. The gut is said to make up about 70% of your immune system, and poor gut health is being increasingly linked to everything from inflammatory bowel disease and malnutrition to diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Even neurological diseases are now being linked to poor intestinal health [6].

The gut lining can be damaged by poor diet, environmental toxins, antibiotics, infections, autoimmune diseases (where the body's own immune system mistakenly attacks itself), and inflammatory compounds in food such as gluten.

Having a healthy gut microbiome helps prevent infections from pathogenic bacteria and fungi such as *Candida albicans*. *Candida*, opportunistic yeast that typically grows in small amounts in the human gut, can grow out of control when the healthy bacteria that keep it in check are eliminated by antibiotics or poor diet. It can destroy the intestinal lining, release toxins throughout the body, and cause inflammation, abdominal pain, gas, fatigue, "brain fog", and depression. It feeds on sugars and carbohydrates (which are rapidly converted into sugars in the body), so eliminating these from one's diet starves the yeast and is a large part of restoring your body's healthy balance of intestinal flora. Fortunately, the probiotics in beet kvass also help fight *candida*! *Lactobacillus plantarum*, one of the main probiotics used in Creative Cultures' beet kvass, has been shown to significantly inhibit the growth of *candida* [7]. While beet kvass alone may not eliminate the *candida* overgrowth, it can help turn the tide and give your body a fighting chance to recover and regain a healthy balance of microbes in the gut.

### Why Beet Kvass?

You can make the dietary and lifestyle choices right now that will help you to feel your best, end the suffering and have more energy to show up for life. Those choices might not be convenient, but the payback of having your health in top shape is well worth it! Creative Cultures' Beet Kvass is a convenient and extra-healthy way to incorporate live fermented foods/liquids into your daily routine.

Beet Kvass is a traditional lacto-ferment that is rich in probiotics (bacteria that have beneficial effects on the host's health). Probiotics can help "crowd out" the bad guys like *Candida albicans* that are trying to make a permanent home in our gut and slowly deteriorate our inner ecosystem and overall health. Probiotics mean "Pro-life". Probiotics are increasingly recognized for their ability to:

- i. Restore balance to the gut microbiome
- ii. Prevent infections
- iii. Increase nutrient absorption
- iv. Break down toxins
- v. Reduce inflammation
- vi. Improve mood

*L. plantarum* readily survives passage through the gastrointestinal tract and has a number of notable health benefits. In addition to inhibiting the growth of *candida*, it has been shown to reduce symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome, likely through its regulation of the "tight junction" proteins that hold gut cells together, thus preventing the leaking of intestinal materials and pathogens into the bloodstream (known as "leaky gut syndrome"). *L. plantarum* also produces bacteriocins, natural antibiotics that selectively inhibit the growth of pathogenic bacteria, preventing infections and maintaining a healthy balance of microbes in the gut.

While powdered, freeze-dried probiotics are available, they are often less vigorous than those found in live, fermented foods. There is a whole spectrum of nutrients, enzymes, antioxidants and

beneficial compounds that are found in live fermented foods and beverages that just don't exist in a probiotic powder! Beet kvass is a great natural source of the sugars that these bacteria feed on and thus provides a rich growing medium for the probiotics. Although beets are high in sugar, post-fermentation, there is only one gram of sugar left per 6 oz serving of Creative Cultures Traditional Beet Kvass because the sugars are digested by the probiotics themselves.

In people with gastrointestinal issues, proper digestion and nutrient assimilation may not occur, so malnutrition is a major concern. Beet kvass can be a powerful nutrifying tonic for people with such issues, because the fermentation process breaks down the complex carbohydrates and proteins to make them more bioavailable. It also contains a high number of active enzymes, produced by the bacteria, which can aid digestion if taken before and/or with a meal.

### How do I incorporate Beet Kvass into my Daily Routine?

If you are new to fermented foods and beverages the most important thing is to start small. Many digestive specialists give the following advice to their patients:

- a. Start with 1 teaspoon of fermented foods/drinks per day.
- b. If no adverse reactions, add a little more each day
- c. Consume fermented foods/liquids prior to each meal to help with digestion
- d. You can eventually go up to 2 cups per day

Reactions are basically any type of digestive discomfort, bloating, gas, abdominal pains, etc. Dr. Campbell-McBride believes that most reactions are from "die-off", which is when "the beneficial microbes in the probiotic food are killing the pathogens in your gut; when those pathogens die, they release toxins which cause unpleasant symptoms - a 'die-off reaction'." It is important to control this reaction by introducing probiotic foods gradually starting from small amounts." So this is why there is no "one-size-fits-all" recommendation for how much beet kvass one should take on a daily basis. Creative Cultures' 4X Beet Kvass is 4 times as potent as our Traditional Beet Kvass, so it would be wise to start with 1 teaspoon of this, whereas you would probably do fine with an ounce of Traditional Beet Kvass to start.

For people with adverse "die-off" reactions to probiotics and fermented foods, Dr. Campbell-McBride recommends starting from "a tiny amount per 5-7 days; as your body gets used to that amount, start taking it a bit more frequently. When you can take that tiny amount every day [with no reaction], start increasing the dose. Proceed in this very slow manner. It is important for you to introduce probiotics in the form of food or supplement. You just have to go slowly."

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