

HEALING ISN'T LINEAR: WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE GUT HEALTH JOURNEY

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One of the most important things I tell my patients at the beginning of their healing journey is this:

Progress won't always feel like progress.

When we think about healing—especially in the wellness world—it's easy to imagine a clear, upward trajectory: you clean up your diet, start the right supplements, maybe eliminate a few triggering foods, and week by week, you just get better.

That's what we're conditioned to expect from the world of 30-day resets and 7-day detoxes. But in real life, healing—especially gut healing—almost never follows a straight line.

The Reality: It's Messy, and That's Normal

I've seen this in my practice time and time again. People begin a protocol, see some early improvements, and then suddenly feel like they're back at square one.

They get discouraged. They think they've failed. They wonder if it's "working."

Here's the truth: it is working.



It's just working in a way your body understands—not in a way marketing campaigns have taught you to expect.

The gut is a complex, dynamic system. When it's been under stress for years—whether from poor digestion, chronic inflammation, dysbiosis, food sensitivities, or trauma—it doesn't just "bounce back." It recalibrates in waves.

Healing Happens in Phases

In functional medicine, we often break the gut healing process into three broad phases. These aren't rigid stages, and they often overlap—but they help us understand what the body is doing beneath the surface.

1. Detox & Clearing

- The first step is usually about removal—clearing out what's disrupting the gut: pathogens, toxins, overgrowth, inflammatory triggers. As these things begin to shift, symptoms often change, too. Some people feel better right away. Others experience "die-off" symptoms: fatigue, brain fog, mild digestive discomfort. It's not a setback—it's the immune system adjusting.

2. Repair & Rebuild

- Next, we focus on repairing the gut lining, restoring enzyme activity, supporting bile flow, and repopulating the microbiome. We reintroduce essential nutrients and targeted support to help the gut begin to function as it should. This phase is slower but powerful—it's where long-term issues begin to shift from the inside out.

3. Recalibration & Resilience

- Finally, we work on sustaining the healing. That means helping the nervous system regulate digestion, reinforcing the microbiome, and building a routine that prevents relapse. At this stage, it's less about supplements and more about lifestyle: stress management, consistency, and real-life integration.

Throughout all of these phases, symptoms can ebb and flow. And that's not failure. That's your body adapting.

What Patients Often Ask Me

I hear these questions all the time:

- “Why was I feeling better, and now I'm not?”
- “Why do my symptoms flare up randomly?”
- “How do I know if this is working?”
- “Should I stop what I'm doing?”

These are valid questions—and ones I deeply respect. But more often than not, they're based on the assumption that healing is linear, fast, and predictable.

In reality, healing is more like learning a new language. It takes repetition. It takes unlearning old habits. There are moments when everything clicks, and others when it feels like you've forgotten everything you've learned.

This is normal.

And when you understand that, you stop panicking at every flare-up. You start noticing deeper signs of progress: more stable energy, improved tolerance, faster recovery, clearer signals from your body.

The Role of Structure and Support

The most successful healing journeys I've witnessed don't rely on willpower or perfect discipline. They rely on:

- A clear, flexible structure
- An understanding of how the body works
- A mindset of curiosity, not fear
- And support—emotional, educational, and clinical

When someone knows what phase they're in—and what to expect—they stop reacting to every bump in the road as a crisis. They stay the course. They learn to trust the process, even when it doesn't feel linear.

Healing is not about perfection. It's about progress with perspective.

What Healing Actually Feels Like

Here's what real healing often looks like:

- You sleep through the night without thinking about it
- You forget the last time you had a bloating episode
- You respond to stress with more resilience
- You don't overanalyze every symptom—you listen and adjust
- You feel connected to your body instead of at war with it

That's the goal. Not to “fix” your body, but to build a relationship with it—one that's informed, patient, and rooted in understanding.



Redefining What Progress Means

So if you're on a gut healing journey right now—or thinking about starting one—know this:

Setbacks are not the opposite of progress.

Flare-ups are not failure.

Healing doesn't always feel like healing.

Sometimes, the best thing you can do is slow down, zoom out, and remember that you're not starting over—you're spiraling upward.

You're learning. Your body is reorganizing. You are healing—even if it's not always obvious.

Because healing isn't linear.

It's cyclical.

It's layered.

It's intelligent.

And it's worth the patience.

**To Your Health,
Hiba Georges, MD**