



DR. B'S GUIDE TO

A SMOOTH COLONOSCOPY PREP & QUICK RECOVERY

THIS IS A MUST READ

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Your download of this Guide in no way makes Dr. Bulsiewicz your medical doctor and in no way is Dr. Bulsiewicz giving you direct medical advice at any time.



W E L C O M E !

I'M DR. WILL BULSIEWICZ, MD MSCI, BUT YOU CAN JUST CALL ME DR. B. 😎

You may know me as [@TheGutHealthMD](#). I'm the *New York Times* bestselling author of [Fiber Fueled](#) and [The Fiber Fueled Cookbook](#), an award-winning gastroenterologist, and an internationally recognized gut-health expert.

I've dedicated my life to learning how to heal the gut from the inside out.

I completed a bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University, an MD from Georgetown University, and a master's in clinical investigation from Northwestern University.

I was also the chief medical resident at Northwestern and the chief gastroenterology fellow at UNC, and I received the highest award given by both my residency and fellowship.

I'm honored to be your teacher and I hope you enjoy this guide!

FIRST THINGS FIRST

If you're eligible, I strongly recommend that you get screened for colorectal cancer—and the sooner, the better. So when are you eligible?

NO FAMILY HISTORY:

If you live in the US, the USPSTF recommends that you start routine colon screenings at age 45 (and every 5 years thereafter).

FAMILY HISTORY:

If you have a family history of colorectal cancer OR if a first-degree relative (parent or sibling) has had an advanced colon polyp, you may be eligible to begin screenings early—either 10 years before the age at which that relative was diagnosed OR at age 40, whichever comes first. It's worth discussing with your doctor.

If this all seems a bit scary, let me reiterate the good news: **colon cancer is largely preventable if a colonoscopy is performed prior to the development of colon cancer.**

In this guide, I'll be sharing 7 steps for a smooth colonoscopy prep and 6 steps for a quick recovery. But first, let's cover a little bit of background info on colon cancer and its routine screening options, principally colonoscopy...

HOW COLON CANCER PRESENTS

It's not like you go to bed one night *without* colon cancer and wake up the next morning *with* colon cancer. It's not like the flip of a switch; in fact, colon cancer develops pretty slowly over the course of numerous years, and that's why routine screenings are so effective at preventing it.

We can see it coming from a mile away... assuming you let us look, of course.

Colon cancer starts as a polyp (basically, an abnormal tissue growth) a millimeter or smaller in diameter. At this early stage, the polyp is NOT cancer; however, it is still precancerous, so it's definitely something a GI doctor would want to monitor.

Colon polyps grow slowly over time, and the larger they become, the likelier they are to become cancerous. For reference, an average-sized colon polyp is about 4mm across, and at that size, it's still years from becoming a threat—but once a polyp gets to be 10mm across, it's considered an *advanced adenoma*, which means that it's further along the path leading to colon cancer.

We think that it takes about 15 years for a polyp to grow from its original, minuscule size to the point that it becomes cancerous.

WHY YOU NEED A COLONOSCOPY (ONCE ELIGIBLE)

We're all adults here, so let's go ahead and acknowledge that colonoscopies are the butt of a lot of jokes (pun intended, though that was an easy lay-up). Your first colonoscopy is one of those moments in life when you know you're officially an adult, beyond any reasonable doubt.

But once the jokes have passed, it's actually pretty normal for people to be nervous, uneasy, or downright worried at the thought of having a colonoscopy. Even if you already know that a colonoscopy is NOT an invasive procedure (no incisions required!), it is still a procedure...

... and you're still probably not the rare sort of person who pines to stick a camera up their butt. (Again, we're all adults here and we all know that's what's happening during a colonoscopy.)

All of this to say: **I would understand if you were tempted by other, easier-sounding screening choices like Cologuard, FIT tests, Hemoccult, or CT colonography. But I will still officially discourage all of them in favor of colonoscopy** because nothing else comes close to its efficacy at preventing colon cancer.

The main problem with the “alternatives” above is that they’re designed to detect cancer *once it has arrived*, and not in any of its precancerous stages. They forego your opportunities for true prevention, which is a damn shame when colon cancer is so preventable.

I put “alternatives” in quote marks because none of them deserve direct comparison with colonoscopy. Simply put, **no other screening method can literally see into the colon and observe polyps the way a colonoscopy can**. No other screening method can reliably predict colon cancer years in advance and stop it before it ever starts.

Because here’s the other wonderful thing about colonoscopies: they’re not *just* a screening method. If we find a problematic polyp, we don’t just take pictures and schedule another procedure; using the same (mercifully narrow) wand as the camera, we can quickly and painlessly remove most such polyps during that same procedure.

In many cases, colonoscopies literally remove (juvenile) cancer from the body before it can ever mature enough to cause any problems. That’s a big win when you want to avoid being one of the 150,000 people diagnosed with colorectal cancer in the US each year!

As a formality, this guide will provide several options for colon screening... but speaking to you as a gastroenterologist with a broken heart from the dozens of people I have personally diagnosed with cancer, it’s important to understand that these options are NOT equal options.

The gold-standard test for the detection of colorectal cancer is always colonoscopy.

All other tests have a 10% or greater chance of missing cancer *that is already present*—which, if you don’t have a frame of reference, is catastrophic by lab-test standards—and as I mentioned above, these other tests have **NONE** of the same chance as colonoscopy of catching new cancers in their infancy.

SO, PLEASE, HEAR ME LOUD AND CLEAR HERE:

You don't want to miss early cancer, because that also means missing your best chance to catch it early and save your own life.

And isn't that what we all want? To avoid cancer altogether?

Research has shown a **reduction in new cases of cancer** among populations who are getting colonoscopies; not only that, but the research has shown that a reduction in colon-cancer cases is possible ONLY via colonoscopy, due to the unique capacities I mentioned above. With anything other than colonoscopy, we are essentially sitting on our hands and waiting to see if colon cancer arrives. That's not a chance that I'm willing to take for myself, for my family, or (now that you're here) for you.

QUICK NOTE ON THE RISKS OF COLONOSCOPY

It would be silly to claim that *any* medical procedure is completely risk-free, and the same goes for colonoscopy. Having said that: the risks of colonoscopy (if you've heard the subject raised at all) are often overstated as a fear-mongering tactic by people who, even if physicians, have never performed or even observed colonoscopy and have never experienced the heartbreak of diagnosing cancer.

Officially speaking, **the stated risk of perforation on colonoscopy is 0.01-0.1%.** But from the time I joined my practice in Charleston in 2016 until the present, we have performed thousands upon thousands of colonoscopies and we've had ZERO perforations—and that's not just me, but all of the doctors in the practice combined.

Never in my life have I heard a gastroenterologist claim that colonoscopy is inferior to ANY alternative test, or that the risks of colonoscopy outweigh the benefits. I wouldn't say that *every single person* should have a colonoscopy (yet), but when that time comes, it's definitely the single best screening for the huge majority of people.

With all of that in mind, I want to share my own experience with prepping for a colonoscopy and recovering quickly afterwards—partly because it should help to demystify what happens and how it works, but also because it could help you achieve better results when the time comes for your own colonoscopy.

This guide is not medical advice. Rather, it is education on the topic which you can use to have an informed conversation with your own doctor.

Finally, before we dive into the prep... I want to know when you get screened! It truly and sincerely will make my day! Tag me **@TheGutHealthMD** on Instagram and you'll have added a pep to my step.

GOOD LUCK!
—
AND NOW TO THE DETAILS...

7 STEPS FOR A SMOOTH COLONOSCOPY PREP

1

LOW FIBER DIET FOR 5 DAYS

Fiber isn't categorically the enemy, and it does help us to poop. But the problem is that the insoluble fiber – skins on veggies and legumes or leaves from greens – isn't absorbed and therefore must be swept out of the colon prior to your colonoscopy.

This can take a few days to wash out, which is why we want to go on a low insoluble fiber diet.

I still include smoothies and soups because when you break down the fiber adequately, especially the skins, then it's not an issue. But on the flip side, I avoid salads during this time.

Here's what's on the menu...

EAT	AVOID
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ White rice▶ White pasta▶ Peeled white potatoes▶ Cream of wheat▶ Cornflakes▶ Tofu▶ Avocado▶ Beets▶ Asparagus (cooked)▶ Mushrooms (cooked)▶ Carrots (peeled/cooked)▶ Green beans (cooked)▶ Banana (ripe)▶ Apricots (peeled)▶ Cantaloupe (ripe)▶ Honeydew melon (ripe)▶ Papaya (ripe)▶ Peaches (ripe, peeled)▶ Coffee▶ Tea▶ Plant-based milks▶ Juices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Most raw plants▶ Fruits with skins, particularly apples▶ Dried fruits▶ Veggies with skins, particularly pepper▶ Legumes▶ Corn▶ Multigrain cereals/bread▶ Nuts and seeds

2

STOOL SOFTENER X 3 DAYS

Constipation is the ultimate enemy of good prep! You DO NOT want to be constipated on the day of your bowel flush, it will make it very difficult and also lead to bad results.

With that in mind, I like a strategy where we prime the pump a few days before so that we know that we're ready to go.

For me this means taking something to soften my stool for 3 days before colonoscopy. Options include magnesium citrate or magnesium oxide around 500 mg at bedtime or Miralax in the morning (usually in coffee).

3

CLEAR LIQUID DIET THE DAY BEFORE

Broth, clear juices, black coffee, and green tea are all fair game. If you can see through it, then it's fair game. We still allow coffee, which I understand defies this rule, but you're not allowed to add any milk to it.

No red food dye. Definitely no beet juice.

GI doctors are trained to freak out when they see bright red stuff in the colon. Please don't freak out your GI doctor, it's not nice.

4

MAGNESIUM CITRATE AT NOON THE DAY BEFORE

When people struggle with the prep, I often find that what happens is they start the prep and watch the hands on the clock move at a snail's pace...nothing happens.

The reason for the delayed action of the prep is often underlying constipation. Yes, you can be constipated and not think you are! I see it everyday.

*(By the way, I have a training that may help you if you're someone who is all too familiar with battling constipation! [**Check out Conversations About Constipation: A comprehensive training on getting regular and experiencing complete and effortless bowel movements.**](#))*

Not to be too graphic, but it's much better for you if the prep just runs right through. The stuff has to come out, we might as well allow it to come out as efficiently as possible. 😂 Anyway, the goal with the magnesium citrate is to set you up for success so that whether you are constipated or not, when you go to start the prep in the evening you'll be totally ready to go.

You can get magnesium citrate in liquid form from your local drug store. It's typically 300mL of lemon flavored stuff. It doesn't taste good! 🥠

But no worries, here's what you do... Add a splash of juice, a ton of ice and a straw. 🍹 Practice placing the tip of the straw towards the back of your tongue. This allows you to bypass the tongue altogether.

Note: Magnesium citrate is contraindicated in those with kidney disease. As I said before, this is not medical advice, this is education on the topic for you to discuss with your doctor.

5

DRINK/TAKE HALF THE PREP THE EVENING BEFORE

You have several options for prep. I recently used the SuTab, which is a pill based prep.

Here's a brief summary of the prep options in the US:

PREP TYPE	WHAT YOU TAKE	TOTAL VOLUME OF LIQUIDS	NOTES, RESTRICTIONS
GoLytely	Half a gallon the night before, repeat day of	128 oz	The prep of old days, it's still used if heart failure, kidney disease, constipation
SuTab	12 pills with water the night before, repeat day of	96 oz	
Suprep	16 oz Suprep liquid plus 32 oz water the night before, repeat day of	96 oz	
Clenpiq	One bottle of Clenpiq plus 32 oz of water the night before, one bottle of Clenpiq plus 32 oz of water the day of	76 oz	Contraindicated if you have kidney disease
Plenvu	16 oz Plenvu plus 32 oz water the night before, repeat the day of	96 oz	Contraindicated if you have G6PD
Moviprep	32 oz Moviprep plus 16 oz water the night before, repeat the day of	96 oz	Contraindicated if you have G6PD
Miralax + Gatorade	64oz Gatorade (not red) with 8 oz of miralax the night before, repeat day of	128 oz	Although often used, it is not designed or FDA approved for this purpose.

A few things I would encourage, no matter which prep you choose.

FIRST,

start early. When you start early, you will finish earlier and be able to get some rest. 5pm is a good time.

SECOND,

be liberal with ice and make sure to use a straw. Go over the tongue to the back of your throat with the straw.

THIRD,

slow down if you need to. When people feel sick, it's time to take a break.

6

HALF THE PREP ON THE DAY OF

Studies show that **we get cleaner preps** by splitting it in half, meaning that rather than doing it all the night before you do half of it on the day of your procedure. A clean prep means your doctor can see your colon better, which **translates to better results**. Just saying...

You need to give yourself enough time to complete your prep. The minimum time to start is 4 hours before your colonoscopy, but you need to be done at least 2 hours before you arrive at your procedure. If you feel that you may need more time, I'd encourage you to be generous and add an extra hour or two.

7

LIBERAL USE OF THE BIDET THROUGHOUT!

You think I'm kidding, but I'm not! You will be getting to know your commode like you never have before. And all this time pooping and wiping can be pretty irritating to a sensitive spot – your hiney! A bidet allows you to gently flush the area with cool water, which helps for cleaning but also for relieving any irritation.

Dude Wipes are preferred to toilet paper if you don't have a bidet. If you're going the TP route, opt for double-ply, soft toilet paper. "Gentle" is a word I look for when shopping for TP...

Some people have found great success applying creams or oils to their bottom – vaseline, coconut oil, butt paste. I actually didn't do this, but it is an option and it becomes particularly relevant if you feel like the area is starting to get irritated.

6 STEPS FOR A QUICK RECOVERY POST-COLONOSCOPY

People often fear that colonoscopy is going to destroy their biome. I want to reassure you...

Does colonoscopy change your biome? Yes. But that is a temporary, short term change. **Evidence suggests that** the microbiome recovers within 2 weeks.

That being said, we still want to optimize recovery of the gut microbiome and bounce back as quickly as possible.

1

JUMP RIGHT BACK ONTO A PREBIOTIC FIBER SUPPLEMENT IMMEDIATELY.

This could be acacia powder, partially hydrolyzed guar gum (PHGG) or wheat dextrin. My goal is to fuel the good gut microbes to support their immediate recovery. In a mouse study, a high fiber diet was shown to speed and improve recovery after antibiotics.

Now, because I know what your next question is going to be, let me say this: People ask me about what supplements to take all the time. I've yet to find an all-in-one supplement to support and optimize the gut microbiome, although there are many out there that claim to. My belief is that supplements are meant to *supplement* diet and lifestyle, not replace them

That's why I do not recommend specific brands, I highly suggest telling your doctor about any supplements you are taking, especially if you're currently on any medications.

2

MY FIRST MEAL WAS FIBER RICH, BUT COOKED AND SOFT

Yes, I want to fuel my microbes with fiber from a diverse mix of plant sources. But recognizing that my microbes are in a vulnerable state immediately after colonoscopy, I don't want to overpower them with more difficult to digest sources of fiber, such as a raw salad.

Therefore, I opted for black bean soup. It's fiber rich, but it's also cooked and soft and this allows me to use it as a stepping stone back into a fiber rich diet.

If you don't have a go-to recipe of your own, my friend Dan Buettner, founder of Blue Zones, has a great one [you can use here](#).

3

SECOND MEAL YOU CAN PUSH YOURSELF A LITTLE HARDER DEPENDING ON HOW YOU FEEL

Most likely you will be feeling good at this point. I certainly was. If that's the case, then you can move back towards what would be considered a routine diet for you, which hopefully already is made up of a diverse mix of plant foods.

4

TAKING A PROBIOTIC IS AN OPTION, PARTICULARLY IF YOU SUFFER WITH ABDOMINAL PAIN PRIOR TO THE COLONOSCOPY.

Not everyone does a colonoscopy for colon cancer screening purposes. There are many who are suffering with digestive symptoms, often abdominal pain, who need a colonoscopy as a diagnostic test. If you are one of these people, you should consider taking a probiotic. In a randomized, controlled trial, those taking a *Lactobacillus acidophilus NCFM* and *Bifidobacterium lactis Bi-07* probiotic experienced less pain after colonoscopy.

It's worth noting that most people do not have pain after colonoscopy, and the probiotic did not reduce bloating or change how quickly bowel movements got on track. So this was really only helpful in those who had abdominal pain after colonoscopy.

5

GET A GOOD NIGHT'S REST

Make it a priority! Your body was thrown out of whack, out of rhythm. We want to reestablish a healthy rhythm and the way that we do that is by going to bed nice and early and reserving at least 8 hours to catch up with a good night's rest.

6

DON'T SABOTAGE YOUR GUT

Speaking of a good night's rest, don't ruin it with alcohol.

During this two week window of recovery, we want to make sure we are investing into exercise, sleep, and time outdoors rather than alcohol, tobacco, ultra processed foods, refined sugar and saturated fat.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

If you're taking the time to get a colonoscopy, it means you care about your health. You made an important (possibly life-saving) decision to be proactive before any potential issues show up. Kudos to you!

There are plenty of reasons people have a colonoscopy.

Maybe you're doing it because you're 45+ and are committed to routine medical exams to protect your health. Maybe you're younger than 45, but have a family history of colorectal cancer and you want to minimize your risk as much as possible. Or maybe you're experiencing gut health issues, and made the decision together with your doctor to check things out and ensure nothing sinister is going on.

Whatever your reason, you should be proud. Here's something you should know for sure: I am **VERY** proud of you!

Now, that you've made the big important move of either scheduling or completing your colonoscopy, you might be thinking to yourself:

Wow, I took a major step to protect my health. I feel GOOD! I feel EMPOWERED! What else can I do to protect and optimize my gut health?

Well, my friend, you've come to the right place.

After years of working with patients and helping them improve their health, doing research and keeping up with the latest scientific studies, I created a number of courses with one intention:

EMPOWER PEOPLE TO TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR HEALTH SO THEY CAN FEEL GOOD AND THRIVE.

Whether that means learning how to resolve uncomfortable (and sometimes debilitating) conditions like heartburn and constipation, identifying and overcoming the myriad of symptoms that stem from food intolerance, or aiming to gain a comprehensive understanding of how to achieve optimal gut health, I've got you covered.

Check out my courses below!



IF YOU SUFFER FROM CONSTIPATION, NOW IS THE IDEAL TIME TO FOCUS ON RHYTHM.

You just cleared your colon. This is a fresh start. You may notice an improvement in your symptoms immediately after colonoscopy. If you do, take note of how it feels to enjoy regular, good bowel movements. You know the kind I mean – big, perfectly formed, epic dumps that leave you feeling satisfied every day. For those who are constipated, we don't want to slide right back into constipation. Keep things moving! This virtual training teaches you exactly how to do just that.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)



LEARN HOW TO ATTAIN OPTIMAL GUT HEALTH, REVERSE GUT DYSBIOSIS AND HEAL YOUR MICROBIOME.

The Plant Fed Gut Masterclass is my signature course, teaching you everything there is to know about how to achieve a healthy gut. Whether you're a healthy(ish) person who wants to learn how to best support your body so that you can thrive well into old age, or someone who is experiencing any one of many digestive disorders or IBS, The Plant Fed Gut Masterclass will provide you with a solid education and teach you the exact steps you need to take for optimal gut health and healing.

This 7-week self-paced course includes daily videos, workbooks, recipes, scientific studies, voice recordings, and I'm often adding more as new studies and information become available. Did I mention it's interesting and fun? I make it a point to break down the most important information and make it as digestible (pun intended) as possible so that you can actually act on the information you're learning.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)



With the Overcoming Food Intolerance Training Series, I'll provide a path that will allow you to rekindle your relationship with food so you can stop fearing it and get back to loving it, without all the symptoms plaguing you. Through this education, you'll be able to understand and properly interpret what's happening with your body, identify the root of the issue, and generate solutions.

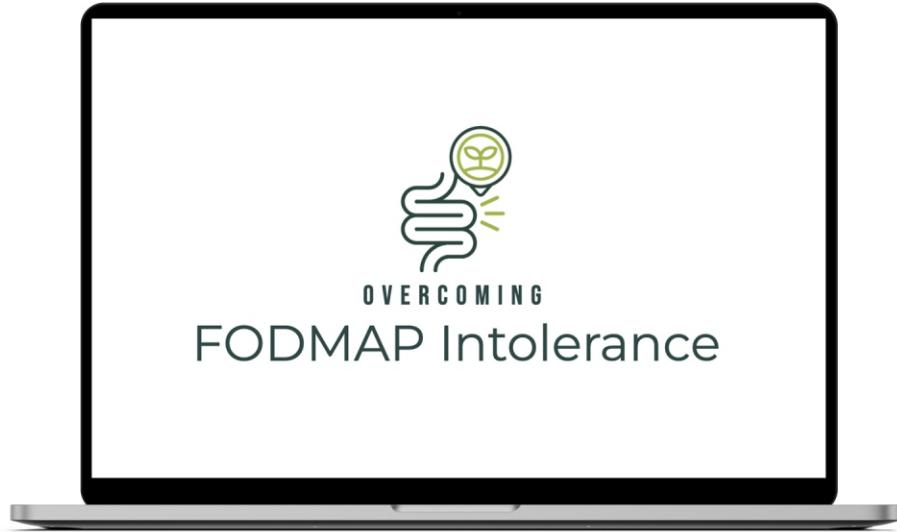
GET TO THE ROOT CAUSE OF YOUR DISCOMFORT BY DISCOVERING THE SOURCE OF FOOD INTOLERANCES AND SENSITIVITIES.

Figuring out the source of food intolerances and sensitivities is a complex process. Not only is it highly specific and personal to you, your symptoms can change and present differently over time. It doesn't help that most doctors are ill-equipped to help people understand, manage and heal food intolerances.

The fact is, it's nearly impossible to achieve a healthy gut microbiome if you don't address existing food intolerances and sensitivities. And addressing them starts with figuring out what the heck they are. This virtual training will empower you to identify your exact food sensitivities so that you can set yourself on the right path toward healing.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)





A SCIENCE-BACKED METHOD TO HEAL YOUR GUT AND COMFORTABLY REINTRODUCE FODMAP FOODS.

FODMAP intolerance doesn't (shouldn't!) mean saying goodbye to these delicious and healthy foods forever. Navigating FODMAP intolerance on your own is incredibly difficult – this course is like having me by your side telling you exactly how to manage and overcome your specific challenges with FODMAPs. Unlike allergies, it's possible to overcome FODMAP intolerance, and no longer suffer from pain, gas, bloating, or any other of the range of digestive discomforts FODMAPS cause for you.

In this training, I walk you through a proven, science-backed protocol for healing your gut so that you can reintroduce FODMAP foods back into your diet and maximize your nutrition.

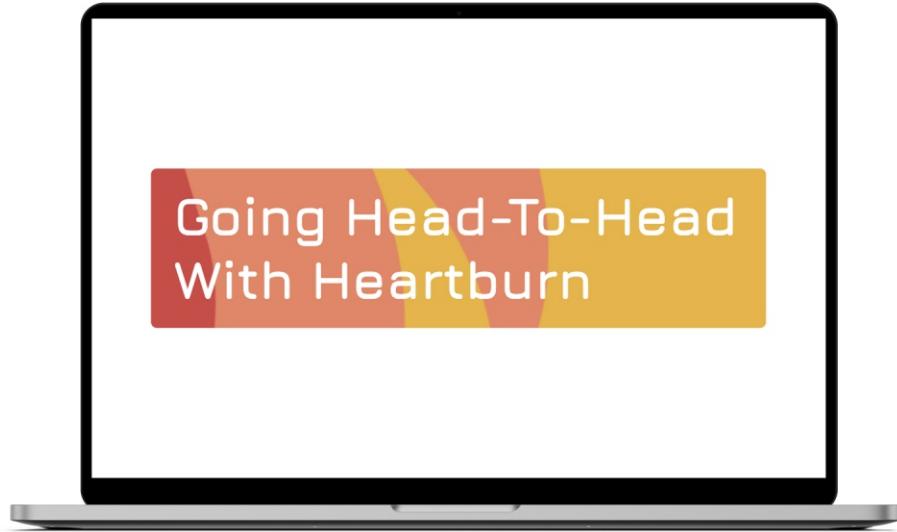
[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)



RESTORE BALANCE TO YOUR BODY AND LEARN TO MANAGE AND OVERCOME HISTAMINE INTOLERANCE.

Many people suffer for years from a range of ailments that appear to have no known cause. From fatigue, body aches and unexplained rashes, to migraines, chronic sinus congestion, rapid heartbeat, and so much more – none of it seems like it can be linked to diet. Histamine intolerance is difficult to identify, and even many doctors are unaware of how to help patients suffering from this condition. In Overcoming Histamine Intolerance, I teach you how to zero in on your unique sensitivities and how to determine your histamine threshold. You will understand how to keep histamine in balance, so that you can continue to enjoy a diverse array of healthy foods, symptom free.

[**CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE**](#)



TAME THE FLAMES ONCE AND FOR ALL.

Heartburn. Acid reflux. GERD. These extremely painful conditions are very common...and very commonly mistreated. You do not have to permanently suffer – it is absolutely possible to heal and live pain free. I call it taming the flames, and I've done it countless times with my patients and the people who've taken this virtual training. By the end of this 90 minute training, you'll understand exactly what causes heartburn, acid reflux and GERD, the appropriate role of medication to manage symptoms, and ultimately how to stop fighting fires so you can get healthy and thrive.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

A FINAL NOTE FROM DR. B

Friends, I want you to understand, this is an emotionally charged topic for me.

I've diagnosed dozens of people with colorectal cancer. People of varied ages (as young as 27), races, backgrounds and life circumstances, but in all cases they were real people that I cared about and their life was permanently altered by the presence of cancer.

Those conversations and moments are some of the most difficult things I've had to do, not just as a doctor but in my life in general.

I've removed precancerous polyps from thousands of people at an early stage. Polyps that, given time, could have turned into cancer. I've removed large polyps from hundreds of people. Ones that covered large parts of their colon or that looked like a golf ball. Ones that were toeing the line of becoming cancer.

Those conversations were easy.

"This is going to feel a little scary, but I want you to know that this is absolutely the best news I could possibly give you. You almost had colon cancer, but we removed it. You are safe. You don't have cancer. Coming for this colonoscopy was the best choice you could have made."



I could go on and on with the stories about how colonoscopy time and time again had proven to be beneficial for those that had it.

I could also cite the myriad of studies that show that colonoscopy reduces your likelihood of developing colorectal cancer ([**in this famous 1993 study by 76-90%**](#)) and that colonoscopy reduces your risk of death from colorectal cancer (for example [**this study**](#) with a 67% reduction in risk.)

There's decades of research to support the effectiveness of colonoscopy.

My hope for you is that this guide will make it just a little bit easier to take the steps towards preventive empowerment and peace of mind.

To your health and happiness,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. B".