



The Importance of Gut Health in Autism: Exploring Functionality, Behaviors and the Role of a Key Gastrointestinal Test

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Gut health has long been recognized as an integral part of overall well-being. More recent research has also revealed its profound impact on autistic individuals. It is worth noting that the gut-brain connection influences physical health, functionality and behavior. Understanding this relationship is crucial for developing effective support plans for individuals with autism. This article explores how gastrointestinal health can affect autism and how the Gastrointestinal Microbial Assay Plus (GI MAP) test can help providers identify and address underlying issues to improve patient outcomes.



Gut Health and Autism

There is growing evidence suggesting that gastrointestinal (GI) issues are more common in autistic individuals than in the general population. Such GI-related concerns that have been highlighted in research can include constipation, diarrhea, bloating and food sensitivities. These issues not only affect physical health but can also contribute to behavioral challenges. For instance, discomfort from GI problems may lead to irritability, aggression, or other behavioral changes often seen in individuals with autism.

The bidirectional communication between the gut and the brain, known as the gut-brain axis, plays a key role in this connection. The gut microbiome, which consists of trillions of bacteria, influences brain function, mood and behavior. Disruptions in the balance of this microbiome have been linked to various neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism.



The Role of the GI MAP Test

The GI MAP test is a powerful tool used by healthcare providers to assess the health of the gut microbiome. This comprehensive test analyzes stool samples to identify specific bacteria, parasites, fungi and other microorganisms in the gut. By pinpointing imbalances in the microbiome, the test helps healthcare providers understand the root causes of GI symptoms and dysfunction.

For autistic individuals, the test can reveal underlying issues that may be contributing to both physical and behavioral problems. It can identify infections, dysbiosis, or an imbalance of gut bacteria, and malabsorption, all of which can exacerbate the symptoms of autism. By addressing these issues, healthcare providers can help improve gut health. This, in turn, can lead to improvements in behavior, mood and overall quality of life.

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Patient: Ina Sample
Collected: 08/02/2022
DOB: 07/11/1981
Gender: M

Accession: 00000000000000000000
Received: 08/02/2022
Completed: 8/17/2022
Ordered by: Diane Farhi, MD

SAMPLE
REPORT

DNA STOOL ANALYSIS BY QUANTITATIVE PCR

YOUR PERSONALIZED REPORT

PATHOGENS

The GI-MAP® includes pathogens (bacterial, parasitic and viral) commonly known to cause gastroenteritis. Note that not all individuals with positive findings will present with symptoms. Many factors, including the health of the individual (such as immune health, digestive function, and microbiome balance), the transient nature of most pathogens, and the presence and expression of virulence factors, all contribute to pathogen virulence and individual symptoms.

BACTERIAL PATHOGENS

	Result	Reference
Campylobacter	< d	< 1.00e3
C. difficile Toxin A	1.21e5 High ↑	< 1.00e3
C. difficile Toxin B	2.27e5 High ↑	< 1.00e3
Enterohemorrhagic E. coli	< d	< 1.00e3
E. coli O157	< d	< 1.00e3
Enteroinvasive E. coli/Shigella	< d	< 1.00e2
Enterotoxigenic E. coli LT/ST	< d	< 1.00e3
Shiga-like Toxin E. coli stx1	< d	< 1.00e3
Shiga-like Toxin E. coli stx2	< d	< 1.00e3
Salmonella	< d	< 1.00e4
Vibrio cholerae	< d	< 1.00e5
Yersinia enterocolitica	4.46e3	< 1.00e5

PARASITIC PATHOGENS

Cryptosporidium	< d	< 1.00e6
Entamoeba histolytica	< d	< 1.00e4
Giardia	< d	< 5.00e3

VIRAL PATHOGENS

Adenovirus 40/41	< d	< 1.00e10
Norovirus GI/II	< d	< 1.00e7

KEY: Results are reported as genome equivalents per gram of stool, which is a standard method for estimating the number of microbes measured per gram of stool, based on qPCR analysis of DNA samples.

Results are expressed in standard scientific notation. For example, a reported result of 3.5e7 is equivalent to 3.5×10^7 microbes per gram, which equals 35,000,000 (35 million) microbes per gram of stool.

< d represents results below detectable limit.

The assays were developed and/or the performance characteristics determined by Diagnostic Solutions Laboratory.

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Medical Director - Diane Farhi, MD

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Developing a Treatment Protocol for the Gut



Once a healthcare provider has received the results of the GI MAP test, he or she can then analyze the data to develop a tailored treatment protocol. The test results often highlight imbalances in gut bacteria, the presence of harmful pathogens, or deficiencies in beneficial microbes.



A personalized plan may include dietary changes, targeted probiotics and antimicrobial treatments. For instance, if dysbiosis is identified, the provider may recommend specific probiotic strains that help restore a healthy microbial balance. If pathogens or infections are found, a systematic approach will be used which, in certain instances, may require close collaboration with the client's primary care provider. If nutrient malabsorption is an issue, treatment might involve supplementing specific vitamins or minerals.



The provider may also recommend other lifestyle adjustments, such as reducing certain food sensitivities or adding to the diet prebiotic-rich foods that support the growth of healthy gut bacteria. This comprehensive approach aims to optimize gut health and can lead to both physical relief and potential improvements in behavior, mood and cognitive function for autistic individuals.

Conclusion

Gut health plays a crucial role in the well-being of autistic individuals. Gaining a better understanding of the connection between the gut and the brain, as well as utilizing tools like the GI MAP test to assess gut health, can lead to more effective treatment strategies.

As research continues to uncover the complexities of the gut-brain axis, it's clear that improving GI health should be a central part of supporting autism. With the right support, autistic individuals can experience significant improvements in both physical and behavioral health.



Bio



With over 20 years in healthcare, Becky Babb Johnson has dedicated her life to helping people feel like themselves again — sometimes for the first time in years. As a family nurse practitioner with a deep passion for functional medicine, she specializes in peeling back the layers of chronic symptoms to uncover the real root causes — often hiding in plain sight, like the gut.

Becky Babb Johnson's obsession with the microbiome began not in a lab, but in real life as she watched her patients (and herself) become increasingly unwell despite "normal" labs and standard treatments. Frustrated and determined, she dove headfirst into research and discovered the astounding power of the gut-brain connection. What she found changed the way she practices — and the way that she lives.

Now, using tools like the GI MAP test, she gains a microscopic view of her patients' gut health and designs personalized protocols that restore balance, boost energy, lift brain fog, and bring vitality back to each patient's life. The GI MAP test can be especially effective in addressing conditions like autism, mood disorders, skin conditions, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), chronic inflammation, autoimmune diseases, and many other gut-related health issues. Her approach is science-backed, compassion-driven, and rooted in prevention. She doesn't just want to mask the symptoms; she wants to help others truly heal.

Becky Babb Johnson treats her clients like she would her own family: with respect, empathy, and genuine care. Whether someone is dealing with digestive issues, stubborn weight gain, fatigue, mood changes, or that nagging feeling that something "just isn't right," she is there to help others find answers and feel whole again.

When she's not decoding gut test results or crafting personalized health plans, you'll find Becky outside soaking up the healing power of nature, laughing with her loved ones, exploring new places or in search of the next natural health solution to share with her community.

Let's get to the root of your health concerns, together.

References

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- ✓ Initial Protocol Development
- ✓ Up To 1x Weekly Check-in
- ✓ Customized Maintenance Protocol

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- ✓ IgG Food Explorer™ (Blood Test)
- ✓ Video Consultation (60 min)
- ✓ Initial Protocol Development
- ✓ Up To 1x Weekly Check-in
- ✓ Customized Maintenance Protocol

* Plus, \$453 paid directly to the lab for your GI MAP test and \$199 for food sensitivity lab + cost of supplements

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