

Program Title: Building a Strong Immune System

Presented by: Support Connection, Inc.

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Moderator: Robin Perlmutter, LMSW- Support Connection Peer Counselor

Topics Covered: Learn how the following issues play a role in building a strong immune system:

- Diet and your immune system
- Digestive health
- Gut microbiome
- Balancing your blood sugar
- Reading labels
- Eating seasonally
- Lifestyle choices
- Exercise
- Mindfulness

Following the presentation, there is a cooking demonstration on how to make Chocolate Peanut Butter ‘Nice’ Cream (vegan and gluten-free.)

Speaker: Susan Chasen: Susan is a certified and professionally trained health coach and the owner of [The Organic Teaching Kitchen](#) in Croton-on-Hudson, NY, which is equipped with a “teaching kitchen and organic garden.” The kitchen and garden provide sustenance, inspiring the basics of good nutrition. Susan graduated from Manhattan’s [Institute of Integrative Nutrition](#) in 2009. She supports clients in building a healthy eating foundation through education and “hands-on cooking” in the kitchen. She sees clients privately and in groups, coaching them on eliminating gluten, making over their pantries, and even accompanying them to the supermarket, where she shows what to stock up on and which aisles to avoid.

NOTE: You may find it helpful to view and listen to the recording of this webinar (posted on our website and YouTube channel) while reading through this transcript.

Robin Perlmutter: We're going to get started, folks. I just would like to give you all a welcome, a good afternoon on this beautiful day. I'm Robin Perlmutter, Peer Counselor here at Support Connection. I'd like to welcome you all to our nationwide webinar on building a strong immune system with health coach, Susan Chasen. Remember that Susan is sharing her expertise, and any information from today, any questions you have you should bring to your doctor.

It's with my great pleasure that we have Susan Chasen. She's a certified and professionally trained health coach and owner of The Organic Teaching Kitchen. Susan supports clients in building a healthy eating foundation through education and hands-on cooking. Susan, thank you so much for sharing your time with us today.

Susan Chasen: Thank you. I am thrilled to be with all of you. I wish I could see you live. Maybe one day. Thank you for inviting me. I am truly honored to talk to the Support Connection group about building a healthy immune system. My intention for today is really to share information to support your health journey, enhance it, and for you to share with your family and your friends as well.

So, building a strong immune system seems to be on everyone's mind today. There's reason for concern, obviously. To me, your best insurance to building and maintaining a strong immune system is making healthy lifestyle choices. So, part of it is that, of course, consuming nutritious whole foods, things like getting enough sleep, moving your body every day, exercise, healthy relationships, and you'll see more as I go through the presentation.

Supplements is always something people ask me about. Supplements help build immune system, and they certainly do. It's not something that I in my scope of practice but supplementing with vitamins and minerals can support your immune system. It's always best to talk to your doctor about that to make sure it doesn't interfere with any current medications you may be taking. A lot of people think herbs and supplements are benign, but it could really have a negative effect. So do ask your doctor.

Nourishment comes in so many forms. And think about nourishment that comes on a plate. You're looking at a beautiful salad here. So that's one piece of nourishment. But the other areas of nourishments come through your relationships. Your family, your friends, your work environment, those type of things. So, look at, when you're looking at building an immune system, look at primary foods as being more than just what's on a plate in front of you, although that is a big part of it. Building a strong immune system is a luxury that every single person can afford, and that's what I love about it. It does not exclude any body. You don't need a lot of money to do it. You just need the knowledge and the desire.

So, a little bit about me. Let's see how this goes. Here I am in my teaching garden. So, since I was a young adolescent in my 20s living in New York City, one of my favorite pastimes was to shop the health food stores before there were things like Whole Foods out there. I could spend hours in a health food store reading ingredient labels, looking at new products. And I really, I truly felt like a kid in a candy store, much to how I look in this picture in my garden harvesting some fresh vegetables.

I was always interested in food and wellness. Years later after I had my kids, I went back to school really to gain more knowledge to share with my family. So, I went, and I became a certified health coach through the Institute of Integrative Nutrition back in 2009 in New York City, and it was really a great education. I had so many wonderful guest lectures from Dr. Andrew Weil, Dr. Mark Hyman, Dr. Joel Fuhrman, Geneen Roth. You may have heard of some of these people. And they all had different dietary theories. So, what I really did learn is that there was no one diet right for everybody.

Family and friends started to notice changes that I was making in my lifestyle, and they were kind of subtle, because I did eat well before I went back to school. And they would question me, and they said they want to know what -- they want to learn what I'm learning. So, I would start creating groups in my house. And we would sit at a big round table and talk part nutrition. We would pick a topic like fats, protein, grains, sugar. We'd talk about that in depth. Talk about and bring out products that were a healthy version of that particular category. And then we would go in the kitchen and cook with that.

So, what I realized was the kitchen was such a tangible link to these ah-ha moments people were having. Experimenting and cooking with food boosted their confidence, their enjoyment and their pleasure. And it took away doubts and inhibitions. One of my earliest clients once said to me many

months later, we continued to work together and she said, "Susan, the thing that left such an impression on me was that you don't measure things. You just feel comfortable pouring it in or doing a pinch of something." And by the end of three months when we worked together, she brought in a recipe, and a recipe I never shared with her, of what she shared with her family. And again, she became more of an intuitive cook and she felt a lot more relaxed.

So, I knew I had something there. I knew people wanted to cook but were feeling intimidated and didn't know how. So, I had the good fortune in 2012 to come upon a commercial space that had a kitchen and it also had a garden. So, this became The Organic Teaching Kitchen in Croton on Hudson and where I see individuals, we cook together. I have groups we cook together. I do adults. I do kids. I do birthday parties. All different type of things, but basically just to inspire the value of good nutrition, which is my mission: educate and inspire the value of good nutrition to reverse/reduce illness and improve overall health and wellness.

If anyone has any questions, I will be answering them, Robin mentioned it, at the end of the presentation. So, write them down.

So, I love this picture. This is a picture you would typically, if you came into my office, you would see a big bowl of something out on my table, something of what we were cooking that day. Hippocrates, I'm sure you're familiar with him. He has this wonderful quote, "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food." Hippocrates was way ahead of his time, and he was a pioneer in his medical field. He emphasized the importance of nutrition to prevent and cure disease. He's often referred to as the Father of Medicine. So actually, I'd like you to look at this photograph and just write down what comes to mind when you see it, if there's a feeling inside you get from looking at it.

Okay. So, we're talking about our immune system today, diet and your immune system. Our immune system is a complex collection of cells and organs. Over 70% of the immune system resides in the gut, which is fascinating. And your gut is right in here. You have your stomach, your small intestine, your large intestine. 70%, that's a lot. With the current pandemic, there is an emphasis on the role of how a strong immune system impacts our ability to fight a virus.

This pandemic, COVID-19, is actually bringing a heightened awareness to another health pandemic that is plaguing this country. I look at it, I call it lifestyle diseases. What lifestyle diseases are hypertension, high blood pressure, obesity and Type 2 diabetes, to name a few. They're lifestyle diseases because these diseases can be reversed or reduced through lifestyle modifications. These underlying diseases put you at a greater risk for health complications, as we all know.

So, your immune system, I look at it as a gatekeeper. It's a gatekeeper to keep foreign invaders out including bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi. Not all bacteria are bad, though. The other job our immune system has is prevention and recovery. So, your immune system's prevention is to keep you healthy enough so that you can fight off diseases, colds, the flu, hopefully COVID as well.

The other piece of it is if you are -- if you're a little immunosuppressed and you're having challenges fighting it off, or you could just be in a very high stressed time in your life, which really brings down your immune system. Recovery. So, by building your immune system, and I'll show you ways to do that, you want to be able to recover quickly. So, the ability to recover is going to be based on how strong your immune system is.

So good health starts in your gut. Some startling facts. One big one that startles me even to this day -- and I know about it, I know this exists -- but the GI tract is approximately 30 feet in a typical adult. So, if you can envision was 30 feet looks like, I'm going to go back -- sorry, I'm going to go back to the gut for a second. 30 feet. So, from your mouth, going down to your throat, your esophagus, into your stomach, then into your small intestine, and there's a lot of footage right in here, tightly compacted where all the nutrients get absorbed, and then into your colon. That's about 30 feet long.

The human body contains trillions of microorganisms. The largest population resides in the intestines, also known as the gut microbiota. It's becoming increasingly recognized in the scientific community that the gut microbiome plays a profound role in our mental and physical health. You may have heard the gut sometimes referred to as the second brain. That is why.

There are hundreds of bacteria species that make up the microbiome. The beneficial good bacteria are essential for digestion, absorption of vitamins and proper maintenance of the intestines. And let me back up a minute. There are hundreds of bacteria species. There are good and there are bad bacteria, and that's normal. You want to keep a really strong balance between the two. And it's ever so fluctuating.

What you will see in the next slide, your gut microbiome as an ecosystem. So, you may be wondering why I have a picture of plants over here. But think about your gut, your intestines as a garden. When you have a garden, you want to make sure the soil is nutrient dense. You want to make sure you have a good environment or healthy environment for that particular plant. Sunlight. You want to feed it water, maybe some other nutrients. Maybe you have compatible plants when you're planting so that they grow more harmoniously. So, the gut microbiota is an ecosystem, a collection of cells that work in unison with the host that can promote health, but sometimes initiate disease. So again, think of your gut as a garden. Your personal ecosystem is influenced by diet, environment, genes, medications you're taking and stress.

Your gut flora, which is also called your microbiota -- you will hear a couple of different names for gut flora, microbiota -- adapts to rapidly changing environments. So that's actually good news, because if you are eating a poor diet or you're having some issues right now, know that those issues can be addressed and changed. Our human body is a very forgiving system, if we treat it with care. In a healthy gut, the beneficial good bacteria outnumber the bad. However, when there is an overgrowth of bad bacteria, it proliferates, causing dysbiosis. Dysbiosis is a microbial imbalance that causes inflammation in our body.

So, there are many signs and symptoms of dysbiosis, such as digestive issues. Examples: bloating; constipation; diarrhea; IBS, that's irritable bowel syndrome; weight gain; weight loss; skin conditions such as acne, rosacea, psoriasis and eczema. I'm sure there's more. Yeast infections. Both -- when I talk about yeast infections, I'm talking about it could be a vaginal yeast infection, but there's always yeast also running throughout our whole digestive system. So, you want to really keep a balance so that -- because the yeast also feeds off of things like sugar and it proliferates as well, which causes that whole dysbiosis. Another thing, food intolerances causes dysbiosis, as well as nutrient deficiencies, but there's so much more.

Okay. So, this is a great bird's eye view into the gut. The gut homeostasis. First of all, our bodies, to me, are supercomputers. They know how to adapt. They know how to fix itself. But what happens is I have clients that will say to me, "Why all of a sudden at 50 am I having difficult digesting dairy,"

for instance. And I let them know it wasn't just all of a sudden. Your body keeps score. It takes a long time for your gut to get into dysbiosis like right here. This doesn't happen in a day. It doesn't happen after you had a week of vacation eating poorly. This is years in the making, which is a good thing because you can always correct itself.

So gut homeostasis. Here's your commensal bacteria. I'm going to try to explain this to you. Here is the walls, your gut walls right here with it says functional barrier. And before the wall, you will see what looks like shaggy rug, these little lines. And it's like -- it's called villi. And it's -- they're the gatekeepers, keeping bad stuff from entering into your intestines and then of course going into your bloodstream. So, they're the gatekeepers here.

And PRR stands for pathogen recognition receptors. These pathogen recognition receptors initiate an immediate response against infection and tissue damage to protect the host from microbial invasion. So here it is healthy. You see them all standing upright like that. Here's the commensal bacteria, and it's happy. And your functional barriers are really tight junctures right here. Nothing really can get through them. So here your body's having a tolerant immune response.

When you look at a gut that is under dysbiosis and imbalance of the good and the bad bacteria, you can see the microbial dysbiosis right here. Bacteria, the good and the bad. Probably have more bad than good over here. And you see how the bad win out, and they started -- they're like, no, get me in. I want to get in. And they're pushing out and flattening out the villi, the protective layer, the barrier, and there's a barrier defect here. And you see how the junctures in your gut are starting to separate. And what's happening is these bacterias are starting to go inside, and you'll have a dysregulated immune response.

Sometimes, you may have heard the term leaky gut. So leaky gut is when these barriers are starting to be pushed open. And the nutrients which don't belong there are leaking into your gut. So again, some signs that you have dysbiosis, back to bloating, constipation, diarrhea, irritable bowel, sometimes weight gain, weight loss, acne, rosacea, psoriasis, eczema, yeast infections, food intolerances and nutrient deficiencies.

Your food choices influence your gut health tremendously. What we eat, our lifestyles and environmental toxins all influence the bacteria we foster. One of the most effective strategies to maintain a healthy gut is through diet. You want to optimize your gut bacteria by eating a diet high in antioxidants.

So here we are with a picture. I hope you can all see this. There's avocado, there's garlic, there's tomatoes, olive oil, some sort of leafy green, spinach. There's ginger, blueberries. There are nuts in here, almonds. There is beans, lemon, pepper, broccoli. There's a little bit of chocolate in here, too, because chocolates are high -- chocolate is high in antioxidants. But that said, you still want to minimize because there is some then sugar in there, but you can have a little bit. So, eat a diet high in antioxidants. This is what it should look like. This should be on your plates every single day.

Antioxidants are abundant in all plant-based foods. They can protect your cells from damage caused by free radicals. When free radicals accumulate, it may cause oxidative stress. Oxidative stress can increase your risk of disease.

So, eating a diet high in fiber to enhance digestive health is also key. All of these foods over here a tremendous amount of fiber, except for the olive oil, but all of them have fiber. When you start

eating more whole foods also, your body requires more water. Because when -- the more fiber you have in your system, the fiber soaks up the water, and you need extra water to really help with the elimination process, to push it out, eliminate it.

Probiotic-rich foods, add them into your diets. What does that look like? Yogurt, kefir, fermented vegetables like kimchi, miso, tempeh. I'm just going to circle back to yogurt. Yogurt -- not all yogurts are healthy for you. A lot of them kind of counteract all the beneficial probiotics that are in it by adding in sugar, and a lot of them are overly processed. So, if you actually can make your own yogurt, that is ideal because you're going to have all the beneficial probiotics in it, or be selective on the yogurt that you buy. You want to buy plain yogurt, organic yogurt. Look for ones that come from a farm that you know cares about the integrity of their dairy products. It makes a difference. So, probiotic foods also what it does is it gives bacteria optimal environment to flourish.

And in prebiotic foods, this is not always so talked about. I think everyone knows what probiotics are, but a prebiotic food, they're high in dietary fiber and the prebiotic feeds the friendly bacteria in your gut and supports digestive health. So, this is as important, if not more important, than the probiotics. I would say they're equally important. Examples of prebiotic foods: asparagus, dandelion greens, garlic, leeks, onions, bananas, Jerusalem artichokes. So, this fiber, again, you need to fuel and feed, nourish your good bacteria inside, and that's what you want to do. And I hope you're getting a visual on this so that you can think about it when you're eating food.

Probiotic supplements is often a question I'm asked about. Again, this is not in my scope of practice, my expertise. I don't feel qualified to recommend them to you. But they are a huge business today. I highly recommend you talk to your doctor about it. They do have beneficial benefits to adding them to your diet. So, you have to talk to your doctor because every single probiotic comes with a different profile of strains. Some are there really to digest, to help digestive health. But most importantly, add in your prebiotic foods by diet and you know you're getting what you need.

And back to your food choices influence your gut health. I can't stress this enough. Avoid processed foods and added sugars as much as you can. Minimize it. That really causes a lot of dysbiosis in your gut.

Take health in your own hands. Read ingredient labels. I know this is basic 101, but I would say that 80%, and that may be a little on the low side, 80% of people I work with look at this label, the nutrition facts. There's important information on this, but to me, if you want to really build a healthy immune system, you want to know what's in your food. You want to look at the ingredient labels, read the ingredients and know what is in the food.

Ingredients are listed in order of predominance by weight. So, first ingredient's going to be the volume of what's in the food. They make it hard to actually see the ingredient labels, so bring your magnifying glass or your readers with you to the supermarket and read them. I could just look at this right now quickly, and I would not buy this product. I'm seeing corn syrup, sugar, soybean oil. Soybean oil, that's another whole topic of conversation we can have, the seed oils and how that disrupts your gut microbiome. Corn syrup, dextrose, high fruit corn syrup, fructose. It goes on. So read this label. It shouldn't be more than five, six, seven ingredients on it. Every ingredient that's listed there should be something that you could potentially have in your cupboards, in your pantry. If it's not something you have in your pantry, you shouldn't buy it.

The nutrition facts, the FDA recently upgraded their nutrition fact label so that we can read it, and the difference really is it gives you serving sizes here and it highlights calories. Now it's in big letters, the calories, big numbers so we can all see it. I am not a calorie counter because no two foods have the same nutrition value. If you're putting out something like -- if you're looking at a bag of potato chips, for instance, and you're preparing the calorie, let's say it's 200 calories for that portion size, and then you're taking a handful of pistachio nuts and that also has 200 calories. Pistachio nuts have fiber, healthy fat and protein in it. The potato chips that could have the same exact calorie count --- and the pistachios are going to keep you satiated.

But the potato chips, all they're going to do for you is cause gut dysbiosis. And they're actually, it's an anti-nutrient, I look at that. And they're not going to give you the nutrients you need. It's not going to fill you up. So, 230 calories, it's known to be basically not real calories, in my opinion, compared to the pistachio nuts. So, think about that if you are calorie counters. It's hard to reprogram yourself. Many people come into me saying I have to count calories. And it's okay to be aware of calories, but that shouldn't be a reason not to eat something or to eat something.

Lifestyle choices to support and strengthen your immune system. These are all exercises I think we all know we should be doing. Again, we know what we should be doing, but we don't always act on that knowledge. It's not just about food that supports a strong immune system. Stress has a big play in dysregulating it. So, the things I listed out here is breathe, relax more, and that's easier said than done sometimes. Eat the rainbow. Move your body. Some sort of physical activity. We're all on different levels. You can walk, you can run, add some weights to it. Drink more water. Get adequate sleep. Maintain a healthy weight and create a mindfulness practice. And when I talk about mindfulness practice, I'm not talking about sitting down for 20 minutes, closing your eyes and meditating. Which is a lovely thing to do and I highly recommend that if you can. You don't have to do 20 minutes. You could do 3 minutes. You could do 5 minutes. Whatever it is, do it.

Another act of mindfulness, and I think we can all do this, and I have to remind myself to do it as well, is especially during this time when we're home and we're with the same people all the time and things could start looking grim, get up in the morning first thing. When you wake up, you're sitting up. Before your feet even hit the ground or when they hit the ground, make a mental list -- or actually not even mental. Out loud you can say it to yourself or to yourself say what you are grateful for. You will see it will change your day. I often get up, I'm grateful for my spouse. I'm grateful that I have a roof over my head. I am grateful I have air conditioning. That I have a house full of healthy food and that I can feed my family that way. I'm grateful that there's really no one ill right now in my family, and that is a blessing. And it's something that has to be expressed and noted, and you will see it will really start infusing through your day.

What I'd like to do because we have a few minutes, I think we're good on time, is do a breathing segment together. One of my teachers when I went to Institute of Integrative Nutrition with Dr. Andrew Weil --. And you may be familiar with him. He's been one of the early pioneers also on functional medicine which was -- so he's an MD, but he took a much more functional approach. He looked at the whole mind-body being one, not just separate pieces. He taught us the 4-7-8 breathing technique. And what it means -- what it involves is you take four slow breaths in, you hold it for a count of seven, and then you release it for a count of eight. So, we could try to do that together. If it's too hard for you to hold it for -- breathe in for four counts, do two counts. If it's too hard to hold it for seven, do what you can. Do three counts. So, there's really no -- we're not competing with one another. Everyone has different capabilities. It's something to aspire to and it's something to try to accomplish one day. Let's see how we feel after we do this.

So, everyone close your eyes. Put one hand on your belly, one hand on your chest. Sit upright, sit straight. And take in a breath and let it be for four counts. So breathe in for four, 1, 2, 3, 4. Hold it for 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. And exhale it 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Let's do that again. We'll do it quietly on our own. So in for four, hold for seven, out for eight. One last time. In for four, hold for 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 and out for 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. How do you feel? You can put it in the comments.

Another wonderful exercise I learned while I was in school was something called the Circle of Life. And I know a lot of social workers use this, psychiatrists use this with their patients. It's a wonderful exercise. It's like a self-assessment. And you have to be honest with yourself when you do it. I did this at the beginning when I first started school, and then I held onto it. And at the end when I finished my program after the year, I retook it again, and boy did I have major shift in my feelings of accomplishments and satisfaction.

So, we look at this Circle of Life. And this is all part of your immune system as well. We'll start with here spirituality, creativity, your social life, your relationships, your home environment, home cooking, physical activity, health, finances, career, education, confidence. So, what you do here is you actually put a little dot where you feel in terms of your confidence, for instance. So, if you're very confident, your confidence is going to go up here. If you're so-so, medium, you're over here. And if you really are lacking confidence, you're going to put your dot right here. And what you'll start doing is you're going to connect the dots. And quickly you will see where you are having areas for you to work on. I love this exercise. I think I'm going to do another one. I haven't done it for a while. But my clients really get a lot of benefit from this as well because it really just hones in on -- it actually highlights your strengths and helps you to identify so that you can support your weaknesses or challenges that you would like to work on.

That is my presentation on how to build a healthy immune system. I hope that you all gained some knowledge, got some visuals on this and will think about it as you go about your day. So, there's always -- people are always asking me, "Susan, I need to have some sugar and some sweet in my life." And you do -- we all do need sweetness in our lives. We deserve it. And life is meant to be lived and to enjoy. But you can have your sweets and eat them, too. So I decided, because it's so hot outside, to show you, do a little bit of a cooking demo, which is what I do here at The Organic Teaching Kitchen, because I really think it resonates with people when they actually -- it's tangible to do it on your own.

I'm making a chocolate peanut butter, I call it nice cream, using frozen bananas. So, with something like this -- and remember, bananas are a prebiotic, so they've got that. It feeds the good bacteria in your gut, so they're healthy to eat. So, I take them, when I have very ripe bananas, I take them, I peel them, I cut them into pieces. I put them in a Ziploc bag, or I put them in another kind of bag, and I freeze them. I take some natural peanut butter and a little bit of cacao powder because I like that little bit of chocolate flavor. The cacao powder has antioxidants in it, and it is free of sugar. And then I'll sprinkle on some shredded coconut, which has sweetness too, great fiber and it's high in fat.

I'll circle back for a moment because we really didn't discuss things like that, but fat is something to enjoy. Many people ask me, will say to me, "I don't want to eat too many avocados. I'm afraid, they're so fattening." Your body needs fat. Your body needs fat because there's a lot of vitamins that are a fat-soluble vitamin, for instance, vitamin D. To take vitamin D, you want to have fat with it. You don't want to just take it on an empty stomach because it will not assimilate into you. So fat

is important. Fat satiates you. Fiber will satiate you. Protein satiates you. So have protein, clean protein, breakfast, lunch and dinner. And I can go on and on and on, but we are running down on time.

So, let me get into showing you this cooking demo. Robin, I think you're going to turn the spotlight on now. And I will take you in my kitchen, my teaching kitchen. Here I am. Okay. I'm right here. You don't need a fancy kitchen to cook, that's the other thing. I have a very modest kitchen here. It has all the essential equipment. That's another thing I feel like intimidates people from cooking. They don't have the right equipment. I can't tell you how many of my clients say to me, "I don't eat salad." And 9 times out of 10 it's because they don't have a salad spinner. And it's messy to clean up a salad. You go through a lot of paper towels, a lot of dishcloths. So, when you don't have the right equipment, it's hard. Many people don't like chopping. They don't have the proper knives. So, once you have the proper equipment, you may start finding yourself in the kitchen a little bit more cooking with more foods.

So, the ingredients I'm using here are, these are frozen bananas. I have some peanut butter. Peanuts are a highly pesticide crop, so I highly recommend organic. Again, you want to read ingredient labels. All that it has is organic roasted peanuts and contains 1% or less of salt. That's all it should have. I've seen organic peanut butters with oils in it, added oils. And I was going to ask you a question, but you can't answer me. But one of the reasons why they add oil in it is it's cheaper than peanuts. So, beware. Even though it's organic, it doesn't mean it's healthy, one that they have your best health in mind.

And then I'm going to put in a little bit of cacao powder, which is delicious. You don't need a lot of it. Cacao powder has magnesium in it. There is zero sugar in it. And the ingredients are certified organic cacao powder. That's it.

So, this is a simple recipe. I don't even follow it. I don't even follow --. I'm going to take some bananas. I am using -- make sure you see this -- I am using a food processor. I wish I could share this with you. I have to put these back in the freezer. I'm taking just about let's say 1/2 teaspoon of cacao powder, and I am adding in some peanut butter. The nice thing about this is you can't mess it up. You can always add in more peanut butter or less. If you're not a nut butter person, you can make this as a sorbet by just adding in frozen bananas and some frozen berries, which is delicious. And I've done that many times. You can go and the other thing is you can just buy frozen berries like this. And here I go.

If your bananas are very frozen, you may want to pulse it for a while. Let me just check the time. When you're doing this at home, you may need to go in and push it down from the sides. And we are done. Here we go. I always serve it immediately. I love adding some shredded coconut to it. And your sugar cravings are going to be more than satisfied. Here we go. I'll taste it for you. Delicious. There's more.

Denise wrote, "Feels good." Kathleen asked, "Are you utilizing the benefit of mushrooms into your meals and suggestions to your clients?" Absolutely. Mushrooms are medicinal. There is a wide variety of mushrooms. Each one has different profiles, different nutrient levels. So, yes.

You know, I didn't highlight particular foods in this program because I really feel like all fruits and vegetables are so important. And adding more into your diet, like leafy greens, are so important to add to your diet. I wanted to really bring out a whole, not a new concept, but it's really newer in

medicine right now, even with more western doctors, about how the microbiome is really an important piece, and nourishing it with high fiber fruits and vegetables and how it affects your health. So, mushrooms, I love them. They're wonderful. Shiitake mushrooms are great. I add them in however I can.

Karen asked, "Does ripeness of bananas affect nutrition, especially prebiotic wise?" You know, it could. It affects the sugar level. I honestly don't know exactly if it affects the nutrition level that much. But the sugar levels change a little bit.

Karen wrote, "More awake from breathing exercises." That's beautiful. Do you see how just a few -- what did that take? Robin, would you say that was maybe two minutes?

Robin Perlmutter: Maybe at the most.

Susan Chasen: Maybe at most. And how if we give ourselves permission to pause, how different that makes us feel.

Robin Perlmutter: I believe Robin, do you have a question?

Participant: Yes, I do. What are fermented vegetables?

Susan Chasen: They're vegetables such as -- like sauerkraut. Things that sit in vinegar and they sit for a few --. Actually, if you made, if you looked at how something like kimchi is made, are you familiar with that?

Participant: No, but I know about the sauerkraut being in the vinegar and --

Susan Chasen: Right. So, when it ferments, think about when something goes bad, it turns, right? But when you're making a fermented vegetable, you're actually building the good bacteria there.

Participant: Okay. But what are some other examples besides sauerkraut that would be fermented vegetables?

Susan Chasen: If you go into -- well, fermented, if you go into the market, more of a Whole Foods market, kind of a Mrs. Greens or natural market, which a lot of the supermarkets have, look for something like kimchi.

Participant: Kimchi.

Susan Chasen: Kimchi is a fermented vegetable. They make all different varieties. They ferment beets. They ferment cabbage. They ferment carrots. So, what the fermentation process does is it brings these bacteria strains into the vegetables.

Participant: Okay. All right. Thank you.

Susan Chasen: And you want to be careful, because if you have a compromised gut, meaning you're having issues with your gut, it's like double edged sword. So many foods are healthy. Fresh fruits and vegetables are healthy. But if you have something like IBD, irritable bowel, Crohn's disease or colitis, IBS, some digestive issues, healthy foods could also be detrimental to your health. But there's a way of healing that gut slowly. And you may need to be careful on how you introduce vegetables into your

diet. When I work with people like that, I have them boiling them so that there's not as much fiber in them, but they're still getting the nutrients because their body still needs the nutrients. It can't -- they cannot digest the food. So, you don't want to overly do fermented vegetables either. You want to keep a balance. I like to have a little bit on my plate.

Robin Perlmutter: You can go back to the chat.

Susan Chasen: Okay. So, Marlene, yes, you answer. I asked you how you felt after the breathing exercise. That's great. Barbara, "Thank you for breathing exercise." Wonderful.

Susan Chasen: Denise wrote, "Do you try and use organic and non-GMO foods most of the time in your cooking?" I do it all the time. But that said, depends on who I work with. If I'm working with a client and they're eating fast food, I don't start talking about organic with them because I'm going to lose them. I'm trying to get them over to my side. So, I slowly introduce it to them, the concept. But for myself, I highly recommend organic and definitely non-GMO'd foods. The pesticide load that is on them really can wreak havoc on your immune system.

Let's see. Okay, Robin wrote, "If you boil vegetables, do they lose their vitamins?" They do. But if you have difficulty times digesting your vegetables if they're steamed and they're not fully cooked, I'd rather see you eat them boiled and obtain some of their vitamins than not have any at all. Some vegetables are healthier and bring out certain vitamins when they're cooked. For instance, like tomatoes has a whole different profile when you cook your tomatoes. They bring out a lot of nutrients.

Are there conditions -- Elizabeth writes, "Are there timing conditions on when to eat pre and probiotics?" I'm not 100% sure I understand that, but in terms of food, no. Most of my food I eat are pre and probiotics. I'd say 80% of my diet probably is because I eat a lot of vegetables and leafy greens. But I don't even think about it. It's just done automatically.

Let's see. "What role does alcohol play in the gut?" Good answer -- good question, Karen, I'm sorry. So, alcohol has sugar in it, so it's a little disruptive that way. Is a little alcohol bad for you? Not terrible. But I feel like with this pandemic, I have clients that would call me and said I need a reboot, Susan. I need a sugar reboot because every single day at 4:00 or 5:00 when their workday ended, they would have one glass or two glasses of wine, and that's when it really starts getting disruptive. It gets disruptive when you have to have it the next day. When you can't just have it -- when it becomes a habit. And it also plays a role on I think how you feel. So, if you drink at night and you wake up feeling a certain way, you feel you wake a little lethargic, it's going to have an effect on you, effect on your day. But everything in moderation.

Susan Chasen: Are there any other questions? Robin, do you have any questions for me?

Robin Perlmutter: I do, actually.

Susan Chasen: Good.

Robin Perlmutter: I have a question. So when you talk about yogurt and you talk about dairy, if you're trying to eat less dairy and you want to have the benefits of a yogurt, are there dairy alternative yogurts that still give you the probiotic benefits?

- Susan Chasen:** Right. Yes, there are some. And you know, I think every day there are new companies coming out with new products. Like Siggi's I think makes a coconut yogurt that's pretty clean. So, look in the -- there's another one called coco something.
- Robin Perlmutter:** Ccojune? Ccojune?
- Susan Chasen:** I think so. The little ones, right? Look at some of -- read the ingredient labels and see what type of -- it will list the bacteria that's in there, the probiotics in there. You'll see like acidophilus. But there **are alternatives to that.**
- Robin Perlmutter:** Thank you.
- Susan Chasen:** And again, back to dairy. If you are a dairy eater, be really selective on the quality of dairy you buy. It really matters. I always say quantity -- quality over quantity.
- Robin Perlmutter:** Can you expand on that? Can you expand on that when you say quality of dairy?
- Susan Chasen:** The quality of the dairy? Yes. If you're buying a commercial dairy product, you don't know their practices. You don't know how their cows are raised and what they're feeding on. They could be feeding cows with GMO corn, let's say. So you really want to think about how the animal was raised because so much of what you're getting -- just like your food is establishing your gut microbiome, your bacteria that you house, think about the animal that you're eating. You're getting milk from the cow. How was that animal raised? If you go into a health food store, you'll see some small farms, like Hawthorne Farms and I think there's Seven Seas. And they'll give you a little talk about -- there's another one, Maple Hill I think it's called. Read the side of the yogurt package and you'll hear them talk about the farm and how they raise their cattle.
- Are Greek yogurts better for you than regular yogurts? They're higher in protein, but not necessarily. Find a yogurt brand that you like, you like the consistency of it. And again, know how the animals were raised.
- Let's see. Is organic wine, Robin writes, less disruptive on the digestive system? Well, grapes have a lot of pesticides on them. So, buying an organic wine, the benefit there is there will be less pesticides and sometimes less sulfites also because there's sulfites in wine. But I wouldn't -- I don't know if it would be that much less. Less disruptive in terms of the pesticide load, yes. But there's still sugar in it. But I wouldn't overthink all of this too much in terms of the alcohol. Having a glass of wine occasionally is fine for you. Again, when it becomes a habit where it becomes every single night you have a glass of wine, then you have to start thinking about it.
- I had a client that told me she had to have -- she could finish a bottle on her own. And we worked together. And she wasn't sleeping at night. She was under a lot of stress. So, between having that wine every single night was affecting her REM sleep, that really deep sleep that you have. She was waking up tired. So, when you're waking up tired, you're always looking to get yourself up. So, she's trying to find -- have coffee to pick her up during the day. And she was on that hamster wheel.
- So, if that's what happening in your life, step back and try to address that. If you're having a glass of wine once a week, it's fine. If you're having it every single night, if you miss it one night, what happens to you? Do you really miss it? If you really miss it, then you have to start saying, you know,

I think this is becoming a habit for me. I have to slow down on it.

Corn. Someone -- Linda wrote, "Corn has GMO. Should we not eat corn?" So, corn does have -- corn and soy, actually, are two genetically modified crops. So, if you're going to eat that, definitely buy organic, non-GMO'd. Corn is a very -- it's a high glycemic food also, which means that when you eat it, it spikes your blood sugars quickly. So, if you ever notice, if anyone likes popcorn here -- I do. I love popcorn, but I don't eat it because it really makes me feel bloated. So, corn should be organic. And of course I do enjoy corn on the cob this time of the year. Not often, but I do enjoy it, and that's really when I enjoy corn.

People come into my office with bags of corn chips or some type of chips asking me which ones are good for them. And you know, again, chips are a processed product. So, are they acceptable in your diet? Certainly, occasionally. But know how they're -- the ingredients. Know the oils that they're cooked in. And they tend to make you want to eat a lot more. So, I try to stay away from them as much as I can.

Robin wrote, "If you wash real potato skins, are they safe to try -- to fry?" I keep my potato skins on. I buy organic potatoes. Potatoes are a pesticided crop also. I should introduce to you, if you're not already, there's something called Environmental Working Group, EWG.org. I'm looking here. I have last year's out. I'll show it to you. So, there's something called the Dirty Dozen and the Clean 15. Environmental Working Group is a not-for-profit organization, and it's wonderful. It goes out there -- every year it comes out with a new list. There was a 220 list that just came out -- 2020, rather.

And they list -- they go out there and they buy conventional produce. They wash them at a very, very, very high-powered -- using high powered faucets, cleaning -- what am I trying to say? They clean them with water at a very high pressure, more than we would do at home, to try to get off all the pesticide residuals. And they always have a list of the most dirtiest, meaning the most highly pesticided crops, conventional crops.

So like 2020, I believe also, strawberries, spinach, kale, nectarines, apples, grapes, peaches, cherries, pears, tomatoes, celery, potatoes are on there. So, these are the ones that when you have an opportunity, buy organic. If you don't have an opportunity or if it's just not available, wash them well and certainly eat it. I'd rather see you eat the vegetable than not eat it. But just be aware. It's another piece of your wellness to incorporate. And then there's the Clean 15. And I believe on the Clean 15 there's avocados are okay, bananas are okay to eat, things with heavy skins like some melons, if that answers your question.

They also have -- EWG also rates cleaning supplies, soaps, detergents. So, it's quite a nice organization. It's a nice organization to support, and you get some valuable information from it.

Denise wrote, Robin wrote, when I asked if you benefitted or you learned something new, Robin wrote yes. Denise wrote, "Absolutely, how important our gut plays in our health." I'm so glad you said that. I could talk for hours about this and talk about -- I realize I didn't go through particular food types, but I think understanding that the role your gut plays in your immune health is tremendous. When you think about 70% of your immune system resides in your gut, it's mind blowing.

So, think about that when you're eating something that you know is less than what --. And think

about am I adding value, enhancing my gut, or am I taking away? There's a quote Maya Angelou used, and I love it. "When you know better, you do better". And that's really what I'm hoping this takeaway is. It's not a judgmental kind of -- this is not a judgmental webinar, I hope. It's really more information. And I think once you know these nuggets of information, you hopefully will start applying it more to your life.

Kathleen. "My system crashed when I sent this message, so I'm trying again. Did you respond to the benefits of mushrooms?" Yes, I did. Mushrooms have medicinal values. Each one is different. Eat them. Put them in your omelets, sauté them, your soups, any which way you can get them. They are wonderful for you. They are an immune boosting food.

I didn't go into specific types of foods and which ones benefit you more than others because I really feel like the wider variety of fruits and vegetables you add into your body, think about the broad, different strains of bacteria you're feeding. Each one has a different profile. So, the more that you bring in, if we have thousands of different type of bacteria, each food is going to feed it differently.

Julie wrote, "Excited about trying this recipe. Glad it is simple." Everything I do is simple because life is not simple right now. It's complicated. If cooking was a complicated task for me every day, I would not do it. I cook almost every meal. I do it out of survival mode because it's the only way I can ensure that I'm getting the quality food that I want to fuel my body with and my family's is by cooking it. That's why I do it. The kids say I love cooking. People are stunned by that. But I do it because we need to do it. Cooking becomes an essential life skill. And once you learn how to cook simple, you set up your pantry, you have -- you know how to buy produce, you know how to shop, where to shop, it makes it a lot easier.

Karen wrote, "I read that soaking vegetables and fruits in baking soda takes off the pesticides. True?" I don't know that for sure. I don't. I do know that when something is grown with pesticides, think about this. It's a little seed. And that seed has grown with pesticides. The whole vegetable's going to have pesticides in it. So, could it help it? Could it clean off some of the skin? Maybe. I guess it can't hurt. But I don't really know for sure.

Robin asks, "How healthy are soy products?" Let's see. "Or are they detrimental with high levels of estrogen naturally?" You know with soy products, look, I am not the maven. And I tell you the best person to ask information like this is really yourself. Do the research. Soy is a very controversial plant-based protein. I have heard doctors, gynecologists write books on it, talk about how soy is wonderful and you need it in your diet. And then I've heard others saying that it can be -- it can add to your estrogen levels. So, I really recommend talking to your doctor, your naturopath about that, doing your own research on that. I am not fully qualified to answer that question.

If you eat soy, like anything else, if you add a little bit in like tempeh -- tempeh's a fermented soy product which is really good -- do it in moderation. You don't want to eat it every single day. Once a week is not going to really hurt you. But again, make sure it is organic, non-GMO.

Karen said, "I will try the mindfulness exercise. I usually just am glad I woke up." I'm glad you are waking up every day, too. But you know what? That is your peace of mindfulness that day. You wake up in the morning and you say to yourself, Karen, I am glad I just woke up today. And see how you feel. Do that every single day and maybe add on one thing.

Barbara writes, "Thank you for a great recipe." Linda. "I heard garlic from the US is cleaner than

imported garlic from Asia." Look, I am wary about any food coming out of China. I have been for years, even if it's organic, because their practices are very different, and they're not regulated the same as USDA. So, I -- buyer beware. These are great questions. Read up on it. I buy my garlic -- I try to anyway. I do look at where my food is from. So, I would kind of say I agree with you on that. It's probably cleaner.

Robin asked what foods -- I think Robin, my Robin, I think we're running out of time, right? So, we'll do a few more questions. "What foods are helpful in reducing stress?" Avoiding processed, refined - - I'm going to say what will help you reduce stress is avoiding processed, refined sugars and flours, white flours. Those will add to your stress level, because those are going to come in and cause that dysbiosis in your gut. Adding in a lot more whole foods, fruits, vegetables. Think about foods without labels on it. That will help you reduce stress. Keeping out the bad stuff will reduce stress.

Thank you for sharing, Elizabeth. "Breathing exercises and the Circle of Life, I am looking forward to doing them." I am glad. Thank you. And Susie writes -- I'll end on this -- "Could you give us an example of what foods you eat in a day?" Yes, I will give you an example. I'll show you something. So, I have an extremely busy day today. And I have some right here, doesn't look pretty, but some organic almond butter, and I added in some organic blueberries. I'll sprinkle some cinnamon. I'll put a little bit of chia or flax on here and some coconut, shredded coconut. And I'm eating this. I ate this for my late breakfast. I'll have some after this.

Sometimes I will have leftover dinner. So, if I'm eating salmon that night and braised greens and even the grain like quinoa or some brown rice, I make extra. I always like to cook once, eat three times. I always make extras so I have it the next day. I often eat leftover dinner for breakfast. Eggs are a wonderful choice with, you can make an egg frittata by sautéing mushrooms and garlic and onions and whatever vegetables you have in your refrigerator and then sauté them. Put them in a -- excuse me; the air conditioner's blowing on me. Put them in a pie dish. Put them in your toaster oven if you don't want to heat up your whole house. And bake it, and you have a delicious frittata. And you'll have that for a few days. That's a great breakfast, lunch or dinner.

Sardines. I love sardines. They're high in vitamin D, high in calcium with the bones and omega 3s. I love salmon, wild salmon, and any fruit and vegetables. That's what I eat during the day, basically.

Robin Perlmutter: Okay, Susan. Well, I think that pretty much brings us to the top of the 2:15 hour. And thank you so much. I don't know if there's something you wanted to add before we finish. You want to --

Susan Chasen: The only thing I want to say is you are your best advocate. Hold yourself accountable a little bit. Be hard on yourself a little bit but be gentle at the same time. We are living with -- all of you have been through life changing circumstances. You're all part of Support Connection. You had to go through a lot in your life. And take health in your own hands. Know that you can be proactive. Do whatever you can to live your best life and to flourish and think about it.

Robin Perlmutter: Well, Susan -- oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Susan Chasen: No, no, that's it. But that's really it. I really feel honored to be able to speak to all of you. You've all been through a major life changing experience. But you're all here, and I think it's wonderful. You're always learning. And we're all always learning. I'm learning every day. I'm learning from you. I'm learning from your questions.

And then you can always look at my website and see if there's any information that I can offer you. I have -- you can always get added to my newsletter list. I send them out monthly. I always try to put a healthy recipe in there and offer some words of wisdom.

Robin Perlmutter: Susan, can you just remind everyone the title of your website?

Susan Chasen: Yes. It's TheOrganicTeachingKitchen.com. It's T-H-E-O-R-G-A-N-I-C-T-E-A-C-H-I-N-G-K-I-T-C-H-E-N.com, right?

Robin Perlmutter: Yes, absolutely. Well, Susan, I just want to take this opportunity to thank you so much for educating us and inspiring us all on this very important topic, for your passion and dedication and commitment. And, a very big, warm thank you to all of you as well for participating today. As mentioned, this will all be available to view again on our website in about four weeks. Have a wonderful day, everyone, and Susan, you as well. Thank you so much, folks.

Susan Chasen: Thank you, everyone. It was lovely being with you.

Robin Perlmutter: Bye bye.

Susan Chasen: Stay well.