



Intestinal Ailments: What Works/What Doesn't

One in five Americans are plagued with chronic intestinal problems. Because these issues make many people squeamish, millions suffer in silence, too embarrassed to talk even to their doctors about constipation, loose and frequent bowel movements, bloating, gas, and abdominal cramping and pain.

If symptoms are persistent, it's a good idea to consult a physician to rule out serious conditions like Crohn's, ulcerative colitis, celiac disease, and colorectal cancer. In most cases, however, there are no tumors or other abnormalities. Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) may be diagnosed if multiple symptoms are present, but it's really a catchall diagnosis after everything else has been excluded.

What we're dealing with here are functional bowel disorders, and although they're not life threatening, they can make life miserable. Most doctors are ill equipped to deal with these problems because they can't find anything to "fix." One of my patients with severe IBS saw a prominent gastroenterologist who, after reviewing thousands of dollars worth of tests, told her to take Metamucil and Pepto-Bismol.

Folks, your body doesn't just up and rebel for no reason. There are underlying causes, even if they don't show up on conventional tests. IBS and other functional bowel disorders can be treated, but it takes more than laxatives and anti-diarrheals to heal the gut.

Diet: Culprit and Cure

If you're dealing with constipation, eating more fiber may be your answer. Fiber-rich plant foods have many benefits in addition to providing bulk and nourishing

gut bacteria, but it's perfectly acceptable to add supplemental fiber to meet your daily quota. Remember to drink lots of water and add fiber gradually.

Gas, bloating, cramping, and diarrhea also respond to diet changes. Lactose in milk and gluten in wheat, rye, and barley are common triggers. "Gassy" foods include carbonated drinks, beans, cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, etc.), onions, fermentable carbohydrates (apples, pears, grapes, watermelon, apricots, peaches), and products sweetened with fructose or sugar alcohols. Coffee and excess alcohol can irritate the gut, and grains, corn, soy, and eggs may also set off symptoms.

Food sensitivities vary from person to person, so you need to figure out your particular triggers, either through testing with a knowledgeable physician or an elimination diet (see recommendations box on page 3). Diet changes aren't easy, but the payoff is tremendous. After Veronica's IBS failed to respond to a pretty good diet and supplement regimen, she decided to go gluten-free. "I couldn't believe the difference. My abdominal cramping and bloating decreased immediately."

Replenish Beneficial Bacteria

Removing irritants is your first step. Step two is repair and regeneration, beginning with restoration of healthy gut bacteria. At Whitaker Wellness, we often order a comprehensive stool analysis to determine levels of beneficial bacteria and overgrowth of pathogenic bacteria, yeast, and parasites, and treat patients accordingly.

General recommendations for improving the gut microbiota include fermented foods like

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Remember, you can read current and past issues of *Health & Healing* when you create or access your account at drwhitaker.com.

Dear Reader,

Most of you know Linus Pauling, who was born 115 years ago this month, as the "vitamin C guy." But you may be surprised to learn that his focus on nutrition didn't begin until he was in his mid-60s.

Long before then, Dr. Pauling was one of the world's most prolific and influential scientists. He won the 1954 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his discoveries on chemical bonds, but he made important contributions in many fields. During World War II, he designed a meter to monitor oxygen levels in planes and submarines and synthetic plasma for emergency blood transfusions.



Dr. Whitaker and Linus Pauling in 1994, Big Sur, CA

After the war, Dr. Pauling campaigned tirelessly against nuclear weapons, and he and his wife gathered the signatures of more than 11,000 scientists who protested atmospheric testing. A limited nuclear test ban was ultimately enacted, and he was awarded the 1962 Nobel Peace Prize, making him the only individual to ever win two unshared Nobel Prizes.

He paid a price for his activism. Dr. Pauling was crucified by both the press and his peers, accused of being a communist, hauled in front of a Senate subcommittee, and pressured to leave his tenured professorship at Caltech.

His enthusiasm for vitamin C further tarnished his reputation among his colleagues. Imagine, a Nobel-winning scientist labeled a quack simply for endorsing a vitamin! The public, however, loved him, and his book, *Vitamin C and the Common Cold*, published in 1970 shortly before he turned 70, was a bestseller.

I first met Linus Pauling in 1974, when he joined me and four other maverick physicians to create an organization to further the study and practice of nutritional medicine. The last time I saw him was in 1994 at his home in Big Sur, several months before his death at age 93. I'd paid a visit to thank him for his contributions, integrity, and courage, which have been a great inspiration to me and an early influence on the way I practice medicine. (Visit drwhitaker.com to read the April 1994 article about this visit.)

As *Health & Healing* celebrates its 25th year, let's pay homage to this remarkable man, whose legacy looms large. And don't forget to take your vitamin C!

To your health,

Intestinal Ailments (continued from page 1)

sauerkraut, yogurt, miso, and kimchi, a high-fiber diet, and probiotic supplements containing billions of *Bifidobacteria*, *Lactobacillus*, and other strains of beneficial bacteria.

For serious symptoms, I suggest looking into fecal transplants, which involve introducing the stool from a healthy person into the affected person's GI tract. This powerful therapy has a 90+ percent cure rate for potentially deadly antibiotic-resistant *C. difficile* infections and has been used to effectively treat stubborn IBS and inflammatory bowel disease as well. Although the FDA currently limits its use, fecal transplant is worth checking out.

Heal the Gut

A number of other supplements are also helpful for GI issues. L-glutamine fortifies the cells lining the intestinal tract and helps repair a "leaky" gut. Digestive enzymes break down troublesome foods, and enteric-coated peppermint is a natural antispasmodic for cramping, pain, and gas. Magnesium reduces constipation, omega-3 fatty acids and curcumin/turmeric suppress inflammation, and a multivitamin addresses nutrient losses caused by chronic diarrhea. This approach worked for M.S. "I started a regimen of L-glutamine and other supplements three times a week for my IBS-type issues and have experienced exceptional relief."

I'm often asked about over-the-counter medications. Pepto-Bismol and Imodium are great for acute diarrhea, and osmotic laxatives like Miralax are effective, but they're not meant to treat chronic conditions and should be used over the long term only when advised by a doctor. I do not recommend stimulant or saline laxatives. Dulcolax, Ex-lax, and herbal supplements containing senna can damage the intestines and make constipation worse, and overuse of saline laxatives is linked with

potentially serious dehydration and electrolyte imbalances. However, bulk-forming fiber laxatives, as discussed earlier, are safe.

There is one prescription drug I do recommend: low-dose naltrexone (LDN). Used primarily to boost immune function and treat inflammatory bowel disease and other autoimmune conditions, LDN has produced dramatic improvements in a number of

Whitaker Wellness patients with IBS. U.P. reported, "I used to average 30 episodes of diarrhea a day. After I started taking LDN, they decreased to eight. This may still sound like a lot, but it's been a dramatic improvement in how I feel and my quality of life. I would recommend LDN to anyone with IBS."

Don't forget that stress is another common trigger for intestinal symptoms. But stay away from antidepressants, which many doctors prescribe for IBS. Instead, try safe, proven therapies such as neurofeedback, biofeedback, acupuncture, hypnosis, meditation, yoga, and exercise, which also promotes regularity.

Take Back Your Life

There's no one-size-fits-all cure for IBS and other functional bowel diseases, but the right combination of diet, supplements, and lifestyle changes can turn your life around, as it did for C.B.

"My irritable bowel syndrome, acid reflux, and flatulence were so bad I was afraid to walk into a store. The drugs my doctor put me on didn't help, but he didn't know what else to do. So I went

to Whitaker Wellness, changed my diet, started taking probiotics and other supplements, and learned how to manage my stress. Now I feel like a young chick again."

Reference

Chang FY. Irritable bowel syndrome: the evolution of multi-dimensional looking and multidisciplinary treatments. *World J Gastroenterol*. 2014 Mar 14;20(10):2499-514.

My Recommendations

- ▶ To relieve constipation, aim for 35 grams of fiber (from your diet plus psyllium/Metamucil, ground flaxseed, and/or glucomannan), and at least eight glasses of water per day.
- ▶ Figure out your food triggers with an elimination diet. Cut out all common problem foods for two weeks, then add them back one by one every few days while closely monitoring your symptoms. Learn more at drwhitaker.com.
- ▶ Suggested supplements include L-glutamine 3.5–5 g and peppermint oil (one enteric-coated softgel), taken between meals 2–3 times a day. Daily doses of high-potency probiotics (20+ billion live organisms), omega-3s 1,000+ mg EPA/DHA, magnesium 400–500 mg, and curcumin/turmeric 500–1,000 mg may be taken at any time. To order the supplements we use at the clinic, call 800-810-6655.
- ▶ Low-dose naltrexone, 3–4.5 mg at bedtime, requires a prescription. To learn more, visit ldnscience.com.
- ▶ For information on fecal transplant, visit thepowerofpoop.com and openbiome.org.
- ▶ To schedule treatment at Whitaker Wellness, call 800-488-1500.

Dear Dr. Whitaker

Q *I get eyelid twitches every now and again and they are so annoying! Do you know of anything to stop and prevent them? — Jill G., via email*

A Most minor muscle twitches are caused by stress, although fatigue and excess caffeine have also been implicated in eye twitches. Stress reduction, rest, and cutting back on caffeine are obvious preventive measures, and I also recommend a daily multivitamin with 500 mg of magnesium and 1,000 mg of calcium. Although most twitches disappear on their own in a few hours or days, 200–400 mg of rapidly absorbed magnesium citrate relaxes the muscles and may calm down involuntary contractions. The brand we use at the clinic is Magna-Calm, and it's available online, in health food stores, or by calling 800-810-6655.

Q *Do you have any suggestions for cold feet? Mine are always freezing. — J.B., Boston, MA*

A Well, it is winter in Boston, so a thick pair of wool socks and warm slippers can't hurt. Seriously though, some people are just more intolerant of cold than others, and chances are you're one of them. Exercise is one of the easiest ways to get blood flowing to the extremities and warm up cold feet. A warm bath or soak and massaging the feet are also helpful. Ginger, cayenne, black pepper, and garlic are "warming" herbs that are purported to boost circulation, and *Ginkgo biloba* (120 mg per day) and fish oil (1,000 mg EPA/DHA) improve blood flow. If these

suggestions don't help, ask your doctor to rule out underlying medical conditions that are associated with cold feet, such as low thyroid function, circulatory disorders, Raynaud's disease, and neuropathy, which is most common in individuals with diabetes. All of these conditions can be treated with safe, natural therapies. To learn about the treatments we use to improve circulation and neuropathy at Whitaker Wellness, call 800-488-1500 or visit whitakerwellness.com.

Q *Is it safe for kids to take melatonin? — Jenny L., Mission Viejo, CA*

A In my opinion, it's best not to give melatonin to children. Although quite a few children's sleep products contain this hormone and many pediatricians recommend it, there's just no long-term research demonstrating its safety in kids. In fact, because it is a hormone, some research suggests that melatonin use in children may affect sexual development down the line. And do we really want to get our children in the habit of taking a pill to fall asleep? There are safer ways to promote a natural melatonin surge and help kids sleep better. Start with regular sleep/wake times, a consistent bedtime routine, no TV or other screen time two hours prior to bed, dimmed lights, and quiet activities like reading 30 minutes before turning in. The darker the room, the better, but if your child needs a night-light, make sure it's dim, with red wavelengths of light (versus blue, which suppresses melatonin).

 Read more Q&As online at drwhitaker.com/featured-questions-and-answers. Send your own questions to drwhitakerquestions@drwhitaker.com.

From My Blog

Don't Let Dry Winter Air Get You Down

The dry air we're all too familiar with this time of year can lead to cracked lips, parched skin, and dry sinuses and mucus membranes. Humidifiers help, but make sure you clean them often, as water reservoirs and filters are breeding grounds for mold and bacteria. A good lip balm and moisturizer are also beneficial, and omega-3 fatty acid supplements have been shown to improve dry and sensitive skin. Drink plenty of water and other fluids to stay hydrated, and use a saline or xylitol nasal spray to keep passages moistened and flush out potential allergens and pathogens. All that time inside means you need to clean up your indoor air, and houseplants and air purifiers or air treatment systems with HEPA filters are a great start. Go to drwhitaker.com for more winter health tips.

 Get the rest of the story—and share your opinion—by visiting my blog at “Connect with Dr. Whitaker” on drwhitaker.com.



Works for Me...

► **Snoring** My husband was snoring every night, not getting good sleep, and keeping me awake too. I was told that the ZQuiet mouthpiece could help. I bought one for him and right away, no more snoring! He says that he feels better and more refreshed—and I'm able to sleep in the quiet!
— K.E., San Clemente, CA

Several of my patients have reported good results with these devices, which position the jaw so the tongue can't fall into the airway during sleep and cause snoring. It doesn't work for everyone, but the company offers a 30-day trial for under \$10, and you aren't charged the full price of \$90 unless you are completely satisfied. Visit zquiet.com for details. Don't forget that chronic snoring is a sign of sleep apnea, which can lead to significant health problems. So if you snore, I also recommend getting tested for sleep apnea.

► **Heart Failure and COPD** My 73-year-old husband has congestive heart failure, COPD, and other ailments that severely affect his

quality of life. However, after we got home from your clinic, he went to our great big grocery store. When he returned he said, "I didn't notice until I was almost finished shopping that I didn't use the driving carts I always use and I wasn't even out of breath!" I believe stem cell therapy, hyperbaric oxygen, and other treatments he received were instrumental in his improvement. Being able to get all those therapies in one place is really, really huge.
— Kristine F., San Antonio, TX

Glad we could help. To learn more about stem cell therapy and hyperbaric oxygen at Whitaker Wellness, call 800-488-1500.

► **Cold and Flu Prevention** I have a secret weapon for warding off colds, coughs, and flu: zinc, vitamin D, and vitamin C. No matter how worn down I am, this combo always saves me. At the first sign of symptoms I just take 4,000 IU of vitamin D, 50 mg of zinc, and 1,000 mg of vitamin C daily for about a week. It gives my immune system the boost it needs to keep me in the pink and I rarely come down with the "bug." It's easy and inexpensive protection.
— T.G., via email

Have a Health Tip to share? Send it to worksforme@drwhitaker.com. Read more tips at drwhitaker.com/works-for-me.

Healing Tip

If your resolution to exercise more in 2016 has already fallen by the wayside, here's a little extra motivation. In a large study of Australian women, inactivity was a greater risk factor for premature death than high blood pressure, excess weight, and even smoking. So get moving!

 Like my Facebook page at facebook.com/WhitakerMD to receive daily healing tips and join the conversation.

Monthly Health Quiz

Which of the following about sugar is NOT true?

- A) High sugar intake is linked with lower protective HDL cholesterol and higher triglyceride levels.
- B) Honey and maple syrup—natural sugars—are healthier than white sugar.
- C) The average American consumes a little over 22 teaspoons of added sugars per day.

Answer:

B is false. Though honey, agave, and other sweeteners are marketed as healthy, they are still simple sugars. However, people do tend to use less of them to sweeten foods. Stevia sugar entirely by using stevia—a non-calorie, natural option.



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Notable Quote

“Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience.”

— George Washington

February 22, 1732 – December 14, 1799

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Heat It Up!

I spent my junior year of college in Sweden, studying, drinking snaps and glögg, and trying to adjust to the very dark days of winter (only six hours of daylight). One of my classmates had a sauna at his house, and we would occasionally fire it up and hang out until we were drenched in sweat. Then we'd step outside into the shock of cold air, roll around in the snow, and go back for more.

For me, it was a novel and titillating experience. For Nordic cultures, however, sauna is a deeply engrained tradition and a routine part of life.

There's a good reason for the enduring popularity of saunas, Japanese baths, Indian sweat lodges, Icelandic geothermal pools, and hot springs the world over. They relax the muscles, loosen the joints, reduce physical and mental stress, and just make you feel good. But there's increasing scientific evidence that "heat therapy" also improves multiple aspects of health—and even increases longevity.

Reduces Risk of Death

In Finland, where sauna originated, they take their "bathing" seriously. The majority of Finns (99 percent, according to some reports) sit in a sauna at least once a week, so this country is fertile ground for studying the health benefits of heat.

Finnish researchers enrolled 2,315 men ages 42–60 in a long-term study to evaluate risk factors for heart disease. Most of the men reported taking a sauna two or three times a week, some more and some less; only 12 of them never used a sauna at all.

When the research team tracked outcomes 20 years later, they found that the men who took two or three saunas weekly were 22–27 percent less likely to die from cardiovascular and other causes than once-a-week users. And those who spent the most time in a sauna, four or more days per week, had a 63 percent lower risk of sudden cardiac death and a 40 percent reduction in all-cause mortality.

These dramatic decreases can be explained in part by sauna's ability to minimize stress and its negative impact on cardiovascular health. Heat therapy, however, has powerful physiological effects as well.

Turns on Protective Genes

Cells respond to high temperatures by turning on stress genes and other protective mechanisms.

Nitric oxide (NO) production ramps up to dilate blood vessels and dissipate heat. Heat shock proteins spring into action to protect against damage, curb inflammation, and reduce cellular death. AMPK is activated to regulate cellular energy and glucose and fat metabolism.

As your core temperature rises, your heart beats faster, cardiac output increases, and circulation improves. These changes mimic the effects of physical exertion, and regular sauna use actually has many of the same cardiovascular benefits as exercise: improved endothelial function, lower blood pressure, higher ejection fraction (an indication of the heart's

pumping capacity), and increased vital capacity (a measure of lung function).

Heat therapy also improves insulin sensitivity and blood sugar control. A small study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* demonstrated that when individuals with type 2 diabetes sat in a hot tub for 30 minutes, six days a week for three weeks, fasting blood sugar decreased from an average of 182 to 159, and hemoglobin A1c by a full percentage point.

You can see why enthusiasts consider heat therapy a promising treatment for heart disease, heart failure, hypertension, diabetes, and metabolic syndrome, but there's more.

Sweat It Out

During a typical sauna session, the average man produces a pint of sweat, or about 1.5 pounds of fluid. The primary purpose of perspiration is regulation of

My Recommendation

► Build up gradually to 10–20 minutes in a sauna, steam, or hot bath three or more days a week. Heat therapy is not recommended for pregnant women but is safe for most people—as long as you use common sense. Drink lots of water, don't consume alcohol prior to heating up, take a good multivitamin supplement to replace minerals lost in sweat, and if you feel faint or dizzy, get out immediately. Overheating is more likely to happen in a hot tub or steam room because sweat evaporation's cooling effects are minimized, so monitor time and temperature carefully. And take care getting in and out of tubs and on wet floors to avoid slipping and falling.

body temperature, but conventional doctors scoff at the idea that it does much beyond that.

They're wrong. Sweating helps keep the skin healthy by opening the pores and removing impurities that may cause blemishes. (My wife tells me that steam is used during facials for that very purpose.) It releases dermcidin and other antimicrobial peptides that protect against infection.

Perspiration also helps remove toxins that accumulate in the body. Analysis of sweat samples reveals traces of a number of toxins, including mercury, lead, cadmium, arsenic, and the hormone-disrupting chemical BPA. Research suggests that "induced sweating" has great potential for eliminating toxins from the body, and many people report dramatic improvements in physical symptoms and mental clarity after undergoing heat therapy.

Versatile, Accessible, and Inexpensive

The Finnish scientists who conducted the sauna study stated that their results can't be applied to steam rooms, baths, or hot tubs, or other types of saunas. I don't buy it. Raising the core body temperature, regardless of the method, provides remarkable benefits.

One of my friends sits in the steam room at his gym three days a week after working out, and another soaks in a hot bath for half an hour every chance she gets. My stepdaughter does Bikram yoga in a room heated to 104 degrees and 40 percent humidity.

I use an infrared sauna, which I installed in my home 10 years ago. I sit in it for about 20 minutes almost every morning after exercising, and since there are no snow banks in my area, I take a cool shower afterward. (Truth be told, there's no way I'd roll around in the snow, even if I could.)

I may not live to be 100, but it feels great, and I'm convinced it's doing my health a world of good.

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Whitaker Wellness Success Story

Heart Attack: "Hope When Hope Was Lost"

"My wife and I are really active year-round with hiking, cycling, kayaking, and skiing, and we eat a very clean diet, so it was a big surprise when I had a heart attack last summer.

"The doctors at the hospital wanted to do an immediate angiogram and stent, but I had read enough of Dr. Whitaker's newsletters to say no to that. I agreed to an angiogram, but the release stated that if they found a need for a stent, they could go ahead with it. I refused to sign it, which made them very angry.

"I felt like they were holding a gun to my head. Two cardiologists, three residents, a handful of nurses, and the manager of the cardiology unit pressured me by describing all of the damage that was going on in my heart, but I had made up my mind. The next day another cardiologist tried to convince me, but when I held firm, he agreed to unhook me and let me walk around to make sure I was okay before being released. As soon as I was unhooked, I got up and left the hospital.

"I went directly to my holistic physician, who treated me with IV vitamins and minerals and hyperbaric oxygen, and I started to feel better. I remembered reading about EECP, called Whitaker Wellness, and went to the clinic six days after my heart attack.

"After I left the hospital, they told me my life I had known previously was over—backpacking, climbing, and mountain biking were things of the past. It was devastating. But when I got to Whitaker Wellness, there was an immediate sense of hope that things were going to be fine.

"After treatment with EECP, hyperbaric oxygen, IVs, and other therapies, I feel great, my heart function has improved, and my energy has returned. Everyone at the clinic was willing to go the extra mile to help me get better. They gave me hope when hope was lost." — *Thomas Evans, Canada*

To make an appointment at the Whitaker Wellness Institute, call 800-488-1500 or visit whitakerwellness.com.

Innovations in Wellness Medicine

Natural Therapies for Varicose/Spider Veins

Raised, bulging varicose veins and smaller spider veins that are visible under the skin are very common, especially in women, older people, and during pregnancy. Varicose veins may cause pain and heaviness and in rare cases are associated with thrombophlebitis (blood clots), but everybody considers them a cosmetic nuisance. These unsightly veins can be treated with sclerotherapy, laser, radiofrequency, or surgery, but there are also several effective natural therapies.

Varicose and spider veins are caused by weakness of the blood vessels that carry blood back to the heart. When valves, which keep blood flowing in one direction, allow backflow, pooling of blood may weaken the vessel walls and dilate the veins. Weight loss and regular exercise help prevent vein problems, and support or compression stockings, which reduce swelling and improve blood flow up the extremities, are great for relieving symptoms. Anything you can do to strengthen the blood vessel walls is also helpful, and that's exactly what horse chestnut and Pycnogenol do. Both of these supplements have been shown in clinical trials to improve these and other aspects of vein health. Suggested daily doses are Pycnogenol 100 mg and horse chestnut 100–150 mg of the active ingredient aescin.

Cherries for Pain, Inflammation, and More

Want to recovery faster from strenuous exercise, stave off gout attacks, and relieve pain? Eat cherries. Anthocyanins, which give cherries their brilliant color, have unique antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties—and less inflammation means less pain. In a recent clinical trial, trained cyclists took either a tart cherry concentrate or a placebo twice a day for eight days and, on the fifth day, completed an intense racecourse. When they were tested afterward, the cyclists who had taken cherry juice recovered faster and had lower markers of inflammation and oxidative stress.

Cherries also reduce arthritis pain and the intensity and frequency of gout attacks. And because they're a natural source of melatonin, they may even improve sleep. Fresh cherries can be hard to come by this time of year. Fortunately, these benefits also extend to frozen or freeze-dried cherries, fresh and dehydrated juice, and cherry supplements. Look for tart cherry products in health food stores or online, and use as directed.

Did You Know?

- About 25 percent of people sneeze when they look at the sun or other bright lights.
- The FDA recently approved fast-growing genetically modified salmon, but many retailers refuse to sell it.
- Americans spent \$875 million on laxatives last year.
- Berberine improves symptoms of polycystic ovary syndrome.
- One in four patients visiting eye doctors have dry eyes.
- Breastfeeding reduces moms' risk of developing diabetes and aggressive breast cancer later in life.
- A third of men with type 2 diabetes have low testosterone, which is linked with insulin resistance.
- Mentally practicing physical activities without moving improves stroke rehab and sports skills.
- Obesity and smoking raise average annual medical costs by \$1,360 and \$1,046, respectively.
- Regular exercise reduces risk of atrial fibrillation in postmenopausal women.
- Lactose intolerance affects 90 percent of East Asians but just 5 percent of Northern Europeans.

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