

# Module 14: Controversies & Myths

*Leaky gut, detox, and the gap between mechanism and marketing.*

Tracks: Core, Clinical, Advanced | Duration: 45 min

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Intestinal permeability is a real, measurable phenomenon — 'leaky gut syndrome' as marketed is not a recognized diagnosis.
- Your liver and kidneys detoxify; no supplement or juice cleanse does.
- Systemic candida overgrowth is a real medical emergency (candidemia) — 'candida overgrowth syndrome' as marketed to well people is not validated.
- DIY FMT is dangerous — transmitted infections, including drug-resistant bacteria, have caused deaths.

## EVIDENCE-GRADED CLAIMS

Intestinal permeability is measurable and clinically relevant in specific diseases	<b>B — Supported, context-specific</b>	Real phenomenon in celiac, IBD, critical illness; clinical implications for other conditions uncertain.
'Leaky gut syndrome' is a recognized medical diagnosis	<b>F — Misleading or false</b>	Not in any guideline; wellness marketing term.
Detox supplements remove toxins from the gut	<b>F — Misleading or false</b>	No mechanism, no evidence; your liver and kidneys detoxify.
Systemic candida overgrowth is common in healthy people	<b>F — Misleading or false</b>	Candidemia is a medical emergency in immunocompromised patients; the 'candida diet' has no basis.

## MYTH BUSTER

**Myth:** 'Leaky gut syndrome' is the root cause of most chronic diseases.

**Reality:** Intestinal permeability is a measurable biological variable that changes in specific diseases (celiac, IBD, critical illness). It is not a standalone diagnosis, and no supplement has been shown to 'heal' it in RCTs. The wellness version — where leaky gut causes everything from fatigue to cancer — extrapolates far beyond the evidence.

## CLINICAL CASE

### The patient on a 'leaky gut protocol'

A 38-year-old with chronic fatigue arrives taking 12 supplements prescribed by a functional medicine practitioner for 'leaky gut syndrome' — including L-glutamine, collagen, zinc carnosine, and digestive enzymes. Monthly cost: \$350. She feels no better after 6 months and asks your opinion.

*How would you explain the difference between intestinal permeability research and 'leaky gut syndrome' marketing, evaluate each supplement's evidence base, and redirect toward evidence-based workup?*

## SUMMARIES

### For Patients

You'll hear a lot about 'leaky gut,' 'detox,' and 'candida overgrowth' from wellness influencers. Here's what's real: intestinal permeability is something researchers can measure and it does change in certain diseases. But the 'leaky gut syndrome' sold with supplements isn't a recognized medical diagnosis. 'Detox' is what your liver does automatically. And 'systemic candida' in healthy people is a myth — real candida infections are medical emergencies.

### For Clinicians

Intestinal permeability (measured by lactulose/mannitol ratio, serum zonulin, LPS) is increased in celiac disease, IBD, critical illness, and some IBS subtypes. It is not a standalone diagnosis. 'Leaky gut syndrome' as a root cause of fatigue, brain fog, autoimmunity, and cancer is a wellness extrapolation without clinical validation. Systemic candidiasis (candidemia) is a life-threatening nosocomial infection; 'candida overgrowth syndrome' marketed to outpatients is not a recognized entity in any guideline.

## REFERENCES

- Intestinal permeability — a new target for disease prevention and therapy — Bischoff SC et al., BMC Gastroenterol 2014 [\[Link\]](#)