

Find Your *Next Step*

A roadmap for figuring out what kind of help to seek when something in your body feels off. Use it for yourself, or share it with someone who's been quietly struggling and doesn't know where to turn.



WORTH A QUICK CONVERSATION WITH YOUR DOCTOR FIRST

Some symptoms are worth running by your doctor before any nutrition or specialty work, just to make sure we're starting on solid ground. These include blood in the stool, black or tarry stools, unexplained weight loss, severe or worsening abdominal pain, difficulty swallowing, persistent vomiting, iron deficiency anemia, symptoms that wake you at night, family history of colon cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, or celiac disease, or new GI symptoms after age 45. **None of this is alarming on its own — it's just the kind of routine clearance that helps us do the best work possible.** Colorectal cancer screening is now recommended starting at age 45.

1

IF YOU'RE HERE

My symptoms are new or unexplored, and I haven't seen anyone yet.

Whether your symptoms started recently or you've quietly lived with them for a while, the smart first step is making sure nothing bigger is being missed. A baseline workup gives the rest of your care a real starting point.

WHAT HELPS

Start with a primary care doctor. They'll choose appropriate testing based on your symptoms, but baseline labs commonly include a CBC, comprehensive metabolic panel, thyroid function, and iron studies. Celiac disease is significantly underdiagnosed and presents in many ways beyond classic diarrhea (anemia, fatigue, bloating, constipation, skin issues, infertility), so ask about celiac screening (TTG-IgA with total IgA). If there's any concern about inflammation or IBD, a fecal calprotectin can help clarify the picture. If labs come back unremarkable but symptoms persist, that's often when functional nutrition becomes a useful next step.

2

IF YOU'RE HERE

I've done the medical workup. Everything looks "fine," but I don't feel fine.

This is one of the most common gaps in modern healthcare. Standard labs were unremarkable. The specialist said "just IBS" or "just stress." Whether it's chronic bloating, unpredictable bowels, persistent fatigue, brain fog, skin issues, or autoimmune flares, conventional testing isn't designed to assess every aspect of how the gut, hormones, and immune system interact.

WHAT HELPS

A functional or integrative dietitian. Conventional testing isn't perfect and doesn't catch everything, and nothing trumps the way you feel. The right practitioner will look at your full picture and use specialized testing when it's clinically useful, like the GI-MAP for stool analysis, MRT for food sensitivities, or DUTCH for hormones. These tools can be the difference between throwing darts in the dark and actually being able to address your root issue with a real, individualized plan.

3

IF YOU'RE HERE

I have a diagnosis or hormone imbalance and need real nutrition support.

IBS, IBD, celiac, Crohn's, PCOS, perimenopause, thyroid issues, fertility concerns. A diagnosis is helpful, but it usually doesn't come with a meaningful nutrition plan. Maybe you're stuck in a flare. Maybe your safe foods list keeps shrinking. Maybe you've been told to "just avoid gluten" or "stay low-FODMAP forever." Both ACG and AGA support dietary interventions as part of IBS management, and there's much more that's possible than indefinite restriction.

WHAT HELPS

A registered dietitian who specializes in your condition. For IBD or celiac, look for someone with GI experience. For hormone concerns, look for a dietitian who specializes in hormones. The goal of any therapeutic diet (low-FODMAP, elimination, etc.) should be time-limited followed by structured reintroduction, not lifelong restriction.

4

IF YOU'RE HERE

I want a healthier relationship with food, less restriction, more ease in my body.

Maybe you're on a GLP-1 and want to learn how to actually nourish yourself well. Maybe you've been stuck in restrict-and-rebound cycles. Maybe you just want to stop feeling at war with food. You don't need a diagnosis to need expert nutrition support, and you don't need to be in crisis to deserve a healthier relationship with food.

WHAT HELPS

A registered dietitian experienced in food relationship work. If there's a strong emotional or behavioral component, look for one who collaborates with a therapist. For GLP-1 support specifically, look for a dietitian familiar with the unique nutrition needs of these medications, including protein, hydration, and preserving lean mass.

5

IF YOU'RE HERE

I'm feeling well and want to stay that way.

You've done the hard work, or maybe you're someone who simply takes their health seriously and wants to stay ahead of it. You're feeling well, eating with more ease, navigating life with a body that feels like a partner. The clients who hold their progress long-term are the ones who stay loosely connected to support, not because they're not doing well, but because life keeps shifting and so does the body.

WHAT HELPS

A maintenance relationship with a trusted practitioner. Most dietitians, functional or otherwise, offer membership or maintenance programs designed for exactly this. Light-touch check-ins, messaging access, and a familiar set of eyes when something does come up. Annual physicals and age-appropriate preventive screenings (mammograms, colonoscopy starting at 45, bone density when relevant) stay in the picture too.

A NOTE ON WORKING TOGETHER

Most of the pathways here aren't either-or. A registered dietitian can co-manage your care alongside your physician, OB/GYN, GI specialist, pelvic floor physical therapist, or therapist. Pelvic floor PT in particular is often overlooked but is well-supported for incontinence, pelvic pain, painful intercourse, postpartum recovery, and pelvic organ prolapse. The right team is often more than one person, and finding practitioners who collaborate well is part of how this works at its best.

The most common reason people stay stuck isn't that the right help doesn't exist. It's that they don't know who to call. If this map helped you find your next step, please pass it along to someone who needs it.

This guide is general education, not medical advice. Always consult a qualified healthcare provider for evaluation and treatment decisions specific to you. Recommendations reflect current professional guidelines as of 2026.

If functional nutrition is your path, here's how to find me.

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