

Welcome to **Healthy Vision**, the talk radio show to help you conquer your vision loss. Dr. Edward Kondrot is a board-certified ophthalmologist and homeopathic doctor, author of four bestselling books. **Healthy Vision** is dedicated to bringing you the latest information for a lifetime of healthy sight and to help you conquer your eye problems.

**Dr. Kondrot:** Welcome, folks. This is your host, Dr. Edward Kondrot. Thank you for tuning in to **Healthy Vision**. We're here every Sunday evening to give you information on how you can improve your health and save your eyesight.

This evening I have a very exciting guest, Dr. Kristine Gedroic who is an integrative doctor from New Jersey. We're going to be talking about the gut. You may be asking yourself, "What does the gut have to do with the eye or the brain?" As I'm finding out, it has everything to do. We really need to focus on the gut.

I heard Dr. Gedroic give an amazing talk at the Patricia Kane seminar recently. I said, "I need to have her on the radio to share this information." Dr. Gedroic, it's great to have you on the show.

**Dr. Gedroic:** Thank you. I'm delighted to be able to speak this evening.

**Dr. Kondrot:** Tell us a little bit about how you got interested in the gut.

**Dr. Gedroic:** Perhaps I should start with a 20-second background on myself. I actually started far from the gut as a surgeon, specifically a plastic surgeon. Some very simple health issues became bigger problems because of how I was being managed in a very traditional model. As a result of that, my health began to fail when I was at the prime of my life and should have been nothing but healthy. I began a journey into integrative care in an effort to recover my health. Years later, my practice was founded on the principles I learned to effectively recover myself.

All integrative physicians, no matter what they end up specializing in, develop a keen sense of the gut and gut health. They know that focusing on the gut is the cornerstone to wellbeing, whether we're talking about eyesight, rheumatism, high blood pressure or cardiac health.

We really can be no better than our gut is healthy because that's where the base of operations is. That's where we assimilate the inside and outside world. Everything we breathe and eat and all of our nutrition is coming into the body through the gut where it's processed and extrapolated, if you will. It's basically being digested,

pulled into the bodily tissues and nourishing the body at the cellular level. It all starts in the gut.

**Dr. Kondrot:** It's interesting. You started out as a plastic surgeon and I started out as an eye surgeon. We both had health issues which changed our paradigm.

Hippocrates said that all disease begins in the gut. I always thought that meant you need to eat good food and have good digestion. The story is a little more complicated. Maybe you could tell us about what is really going on in the gut. What is happening to our society? At the meeting, someone mentioned that no one in the US has a healthy gut.

**Dr. Gedroic:** It's true. We really don't think about it. We think nothing of taking an Advil when we have a headache or taking Claritin when we get sniffles in the spring. Then there are all of our prescriptive medications. Where are they going? They're going right into our gut.

What is the gut? Let's be more specific. It is trillions of microbes. Since the beginning of the microbiome project in the US and other countries worldwide with its inception in 2007, we've determined that there are at least 10 bacterial cells to every one human cell.

It's an extremely humbling concept to think that we are no more than a human vehicle for these bacteria. We are intimately dependent on them and they are responsible for our nutrition. We think about our ability to stay healthy between meals. That happens because we have all these little bacteria maintaining vitamin levels, glucose and all the nutrients in the bloodstream. It's effectively because of this machinery that we have.

The correlate to that is they are also defining our immune system. They make the distinction between self and non-self. So many of us today are afflicted by autoimmune disorders. What is that? Now we're finding that this concept of autoimmunity is not what we thought it was at all. It's us losing the battle against these gut pathogens because we are eating the wrong foods and taking the wrong medications. We're negatively impacting the healthy flora.

Commercials are cropping up even in common-time television saying to take Activia and probiotics. That's trying to get the idea out there that we have to think actively about how to maintain healthy gut populations of bacteria to maintain balance and an anti-inflammatory state. There are many layers of this, and it's only now becoming better understood exactly how integral this is to our health.

**Dr. Kondrot:** It's amazing. There are over 1 trillion bacteria present in our gut. That's a phenomenal statistic that there are 10 bacterial organisms per human cell. These organisms are our friends. They're not our enemy.

What has happened? Talk about the elements that are destroying our gut. It actually begins at birth.

**Dr. Gedroic:** One hundred percent. Today, we have the beautiful option of a C-section if the mother or baby is in jeopardy. We don't pause to think, "What does that do to the developing infant's gut?"

I have three boys. My only vaginal was 10 pounds, unlucky for me. The two smaller guys came out C-section. I got to push one out, but the C-section babies don't come through the vaginal tract. When those babies are in the canal, they're spending hours engulfing the mother's vaginal secretions.

High populations of lactobacillus are what populate the gut, and that is the normal course of events. Hopefully, the baby is breastfed. Then bifidobacterium start to become the second population. It is very normal for a breastfed infant to be colonized by these populations.

When a baby comes out via C-section, has to go to the NICU or has to spend time being instrumented or having other kinds of skin flora contact, those populations of bacteria make their way into the infant's gut and set up all sorts of changes we don't even have a model for. We're starting to see the impact of that today because we're three generations into C-sections. We don't know what this is doing to our long-term prognosis in terms of gut health. This is just one example.

Fast forward that to the introduction of solid food and all of the additives, chemicals and food dyes. Forget us and our healthy brains or unhealthy brains as a result of those chemicals. How about the poor little bacteria that are trying to survive when they're exposed to all of this stuff in our food supply? This is where we have to start targeting our thought processes.

**Dr. Kondrot:** After a C-section, mothers usually get high doses of antibiotics which are then transferred to the infant via breastmilk. I don't know if hospitals routinely give antibiotics to newborn babies. Many times, they do. You made a good point about these poor infants being exposed to the wrong bacteria, MRSA strains and resistant strains that are found in the hospital. We're giving them the wrong bacteria.

We're coming up to a break on **Healthy Vision**. My guest is Dr. Kristine Gedroic. We're talking about the gut. This is phenomenal. I think managing the gut is going to be the future for so many aspects of medicine, particularly my specialty of ophthalmology. When we come back, we're going to be talking about how the gut affects the brain. It's fascinating information, folks, so stay tuned. We'll be right back after this break.

Welcome back to **Healthy Vision**. With me is Kristine Gedroic, and we're talking about the gut. Many of you are probably asking, "What can we do to improve the health of our gut?" The first step is looking at what's unique. Dr. Gedroic, let's talk about how we're destroying our gut with the food we're eating.

**Dr. Gedroic:** We could be here all night, but we'll bring it down to something we can all walk away with. It's really hard to make the translation from the written word and the conceptualization of health and what we need to be doing to what we actually need to do when we wake up in the morning. What's the first bite of food we put in our mouth?

It's amazing that from start to finish in our practice, whether we're dealing with the smallest health issues or the largest, it's still that translational step of getting the patient to understand that their journey to wellness is as dependent on what they continue to eat as anything I could do for them.

First and foremost, we take gluten out of everybody's diet. Many people say, "I didn't test for celiac. I don't have gluten sensitivity." I say, "Then you're one of the lucky ones that doesn't seem to know exactly how enflamed you are from that gluten, but give it 20 years. You're going to have heart disease, the onset of dementia, hypertension or some other problem as a result of it."

The simple thing is to go gluten free. The reason is not because wheat is the enemy. It's because of what we've done to wheat. We have many patients who have European descent. They'll say, "I went home to Italy and had that pasta meal I've been craving. I didn't feel bloated or get a headache the way I would have if I'd eaten it here."

When they come back and confess as if they've cheated, I say, "You didn't do anything wrong at all." It's American wheat that's been modified to such an extent that we no longer can digest it properly. We'd need to have four stomachs in order to do it.

Some of us get away with eating it from the perspective of not knowing how much inflammation it's causing. The people who are being plagued with the headaches, joint pain and skin rashes are the lucky ones because they at least know to stay away from it for obvious reasons. The whole population at large is not being well served by this American wheat.

We tell everyone to be gluten free. That's the very basic thing. Then try to avoid the biggest offending foods that are genetically modified. Next in line would be soy and corn. That's a whole discussion in itself. With the genetic modification of these foods, basically they go through our intestines like a scouring pad. There are animal studies that have looked at animals consuming genetically modified foods and foods that are not modified. When they do autopsies on these animals, the poor animals consuming GMOs look like their intestines have been rubbed raw with a Brillo pad.

**Dr. Kondrot:** There was an amazing study reported at the meeting we attended. They did electron microscopy of the gut lining, and 20 minutes after ingesting genetically modified foods, you could see phenomenal changes in the gut lining. The gut became leaky.

**Dr. Gedroic:** Do you know what's so bad? This is in baby food. We wonder why all these kids are ending up sick. Why do they have ADHD that starts at the age of 3? Why do they have recurrent ear infections?

I have a practice of half adults and half children. There are kids who come to see me with recurrent ear infections and parents want me to try to save the tubes. They don't want the surgery and they say, "What can we do?" I say, "You have to start with the diet."

The gut tube starts at the nose and the mouth, and it goes all the way through to the bottom. The whole oral pharyngeal nasal cavity is also considered the gut in the medical community. Any time we're talking about inflammation in the upper tract, asthma, allergies or recurrent sinus infections, this is all the same to us as gut, so we consider the same tenets. We have to change the diet immediately.

What we generally do is put them on a largely Paleo diet, which is a lot of vegetables. We don't need to underscore how important they are. We want a good, healthy source of protein as clean as it can be according to what you're able to do with your financial situation. Then have a great healthy source of fat, an incredibly important macro group of foods that we don't even consider as much as we should.

Nuts and seeds are wonderful. Legumes are wonderful. Fruits are allowed depending on the certain medical conditions we're looking at.

We add carbohydrates back in the form of starchy vegetables, potatoes and non-gluten grains according to caloric expenditure. For instance, if we have a young boy who's running all sorts of sports and activities, we'll make sure he's getting enough calories in that way.

**Dr. Kondrot:** You want to make sure the potatoes are not genetically modified. What is your feeling about rice?

**Dr. Gedroic:** Rice is very interesting. Even the organic rices are coming up with a lot of arsenic today. I test everybody through the standard lab in our area. LabCorp, Quest and Bio Resources are three of the big national labs. There'll be blood levels of arsenic. It may not be over the normal level. Some are, but many are just right under normal. What is arsenic doing in the blood at all? Many times when those patients come back with those levels, I'll say, "Do you eat a lot of rice?" Sure enough, the answer is yes. I really have to wonder.

We do allow it, but we ask patients to rotate as much as possible. I think, across the board, you get in trouble when you continue to eat the same foods all the time.

**Dr. Kondrot:** What are your thoughts on taking active probiotics? Are there any particular foods that can help work on restoring the gut?

**Dr. Gedroic:** We spent that whole conference hearing several medical opinions on the best way to handle this. We have had a number of naturally fermented or cultured foods. This is an interesting subject and one that I have a fascination with, so I'll give a little sound bite.

Before the advent of refrigeration, all cultures in the world used to ferment foods as a way of preserving them. Almost all of our condiments began in this fashion, including chutney, mustard, ketchup and mayonnaise. These were all naturally cultured or fermented foods, which means they had healthy bacteria added to them. With that, they could withstand ambient temperatures for weeks to months without going bad. Those foods were taken alongside the meat to help our digestive process.

Today we see remnants of these foods with kefir, yogurt, and some of the cultured butters, sour creams and things that are now on the market in the specialty stores. Other than taking a supplemental probiotic, I think the best way to get natural

bacteria into the gut is to do the cultured food. This is as close as we can get to how it was done from the beginning of time.

**Dr. Kondrot:** Folks, if you're listening out there, learn how to ferment your own foods. Make your own sauerkraut and pickled foods. That's probably the best way. Ferment healthy, organic vegetables. Make your own sauerkraut. I have in the past. I have a little crockpot, and I put fresh cabbage in with carrots and things like that. It's amazing. We have to get more back to nature.

We're coming up to another break. When we come back, we're going to shift gears and talk a little bit about how the gut affects the brain and the eye. There's a really interesting connection. Now I'm really looking at the health of the gut for all people that have vision problems. We'll be right back after this break.

Welcome back to **Healthy Vision**. We're talking about the gut. Dr. Gedroic, let's talk about the big issue and how the gut affects the brain and the eye. On break, you mentioned a lymphatic study, so let's talk about that, too.

**Dr. Gedroic:** There's an outpouring of research right now that's coming in to better understand this tremendous gut/brain access and bi-directionality, meaning the gut talks to the brain and the brain talks to the gut, which is fascinating.

Understanding the link in the first place is profound. We eat, and there is inflammation or lack of inflammation as a result of our choices. Then there is an immediate translation of that into the brain. Likewise, stress levels and other factors can influence the brain externally, which then impacts the gut. They're talking to each other all the time.

As a result of that conversation, the populations of gut bacteria are being modulated. Think of how fascinating that is. They've done studies to show that when we meditate, we actually promote healthy levels of certain gut bacteria that reduce stress and cortisol. They help lower inflammation in the gut. I find it amazing to think of the whole undercurrent happening in our bodies all the time.

**Dr. Kondrot:** I heard that there are two brains and that the belly-brain is more important than the brain up top because the belly-brain is the true general that regulates the superior brain.

**Dr. Gedroic:** Absolutely. That's the second brain. That's beautiful work. The recent study that just came out of the University of Virginia demonstrated that there's actually a separate lymphatic system.

You and I learned there was the one lymphatic system going through the thyroglossal duct and into the sinus. There's now a new one connecting the brain and the gut directly, and it's bypassing the body. This means that infections in the gut are directly impacting the brain chemistry.

Think about the ramifications of that to the autistic population or the other behavioral disorders. What we know to be central nervous system inflammation could in fact all be being caused by gut inflammation at the root core, and that translation is to the central nervous system.

**Dr. Kondrot:** That unique lymphatic system has me curious because some people say glaucoma is a disease of the lymphatic system, which adversely affects the circulation to the eye, the buildup of pressure, and then arteriosclerotic changes and vascular changes to the optic nerve. It's an even stronger connection with the gut and the eye. We really have to get our patients to clean up their diet and avoid all these harmful things they're doing to the gut to really restore their health.

**Dr. Gedroic:** That's fascinating with glaucoma. It makes perfect sense.

I have three young boys, and they're teaching me things every day. They're 7, 5 and 4, and they're filled with these hilarious things. I teach them it's so important about their food. Sometimes they buck against it and want to defy me, run off, find some candy and hide behind a tree, but for the most part, they're compliant.

They say, "Mommy, can I have this?" The two that can read, read the package. I say, "It's pretty simple. If you can pronounce everything on that ingredient label and find it in our house, you can eat it. If you don't know what it is, put it back." That stops all the chitter-chat at the supermarket because they know if they can read everything and they know where to find it in our pantry or refrigerator, that's what they're going to be allowed to have.

It's such a simple concept. It really holds true, child or adult. It's the same exact concept all around. We think nothing of putting these additives in our body that are 25 chemicals long on the food label. We don't think about how that's impacting us.

**Dr. Kondrot:** If it has a label, you probably shouldn't be eating it. That's what I tell my patients. Let's talk a little bit about the gut connection with autism. The incidence of autism, Attention Deficit Disorder and that whole spectrum is rising. What are your thoughts on the gut connection?

**Dr. Gedroic:** There are so many. I live in a hotbed. Demographically, we have the highest prevalence of autism in the US. I'm in Morristown, New Jersey. One in 67 males is classified with ASD, but there are just as many on the spectrum that have atypical behavioral patterns. It's really tough.

These are the children I see in my practice. It is so important that their diets be pristine, just like any. A well child and an unwell child are just as important. Sadly, the autistic population has a lot of sensory issues, so they're very difficult to feed. I feel for the parents who struggle with this.

Not only is it difficult to get a well-child to stay on task with their food choices, but to try to get a child who has so many issues get their diets well-rounded can be a real struggle. It's tough, but they have to do it because if they don't feed those children well, whatever they're going to recover won't be recoverable without the nutrients coming in.

I like to take it one step further. I see many children who have forms of infections. We live in a Lyme infected area, so I'm seeing a lot of Lyme disease and some of the co-infections that go with that. One of the challenges we have is actually keeping our kids well. If a child is bitten and they have a good nutrient base, that child generally doesn't get that sick. It's an easy infection to resolve. The nutrient base gets so low or poor that these children are very hard to keep well. They're kind of sliding beneath the level of wellness simply from the fact that their bodies aren't nourished well enough.

**Dr. Kondrot:** There's an old saying that it's not the organism. It's the terrain. Unfortunately, in our society for so many children, their terrain is not healthy, so they're more susceptible to the infections and don't have enough of the healthy bacteria in their gut to balance.

There was something else very interesting we could talk about. It's this idea about this obsessiveness with cleanliness that's going on in our society. It actually can be very detrimental to us to wear plastic gloves all the time and use powerful disinfectants to rinse our hands. It's actually not helping us. Do you want to comment on that?

**Dr. Gedroic:** I couldn't agree more. I don't understand this obsession with sterility, but it parallels the shift in thought process about our health. We have lost, as a nation, our confidence in our physical health. Nobody knows how to get themselves better on home remedies anymore. It's almost to the point of anxiety of going too far away from a CVS where there's a Z-Pak because if you get a sniffle,

you're going to get a sinus infection or bronchitis, and you're going to get sick. Sick people don't have the sense of the strength of their immune system.

When our children were babies, I didn't wash their hands in airports. Can you imagine? We go through flu season, and I did not wash their hands. My kids never got sick because if they were dirty, they were dirty. We would wash them before they ate, but you couldn't stop every last time they put their hand in their mouth. That's part of what builds their immune system. Now they don't get sick. We're missing that whole component of what used to occur during infancy and early childhood. These kids are kept sterile.

**Dr. Kondrot:** It used to be that kids would go outside after school, play in the dirt, roll around and suck on twigs. They'd be outdoors. Nowadays, they come home. They're in a sterile environment. They're playing video games and watching TV. It's horrible. We need that exposure to bacteria to improve our overall health. Something has to change.

We're coming up to another break. With me is Dr. Gedroic. When we come back, we're going to continue talking about the importance of the gut.

We're back talking about the gut. We have a lot more material to go through before the show ends. On the break, Dr. Gedroic and I were talking about parasites. We were also talking about sharing bacteria. Let's talk a little bit about those items.

**Dr. Gedroic:** We closed the last segment with the idea of kids rolling around in the dirt, which we don't do anymore today. I grew up on a farm. I remember finding fun in sliding down the manure pile and being filthy by the time I got in the car to come home. What does that do for us?

Now they're finding that the early introduction of parasites, as gross as the concept may be, is having profoundly regulatory effects on our immune system. Some of the new forays are into management of things like colitis and other autoimmune diseases.

Colitis is the first area they're exploring. They're looking at the act of introducing parasites into the body that become kind of the temporary resident for about a year, and they control the colitis. Then the parasite moves on because we're not the ideal host for that particular one. It's very interesting. We're addressing the issue of parasites vis-à-vis the microbiome in our practice on a daily basis and seeing how it's impacting the regulation of the immune system in a positive and negative way.

**Dr. Kondrot:** Also, it's close contact with people and sharing your bacteria, which we need. We need a lot of exposure to bacteria. This may be the most interesting thing that's being done, something called a fecal transplant. It boggles my mind, but essentially, you're replacing all the fecal material with someone's healthy intestinal flora. This has been an amazing treatment for some serious neurological problems. Maybe we could talk a little bit about that.

**Dr. Gedroic:** It's a beautiful new area of research and study that is really exploding. We were at the conference about the fecal microbiota transplant, which is a little more refined. This is done at the Taymount Clinic in England. They pioneered this work. It's more refined from the perspective of removing the actual bacteria from the fecal sample that's being transplanted instead of actually transplanting the feces itself.

This has actually been in traditional medical models. Ancient Chinese medicine had ways of doing this to restore health. If they had a baby that wasn't doing well, they would take the mother's, a twin's or another sibling's feces and feed it. It's an interesting concept.

I was introduced to the concept for the very first time when I was reading the literature on how some of the soil organisms that are now packaged in probiotics were first discovered. It was the soldiers in the war in Egypt, I believe. They were suffering from dysentery and were told to follow behind the camels and eat the hot dung. That's what cured them of the dysentery.

We're spending large sums of money on probiotics, and we just talked about culturing food. Think about it. A fecal transplant is just taking the same raw material and putting it right at the source instead of needing to have it pass all the way through the gut.

**Dr. Kondrot:** We've covered so much information. As the bottom line, maybe you could summarize what people need to do. I hope we emphasized to everyone how important your gut is. You need to begin taking steps to re-nourish your gut, diversify the bacteria in your gut and get your gut healthy. Do you have some final important comments that people should begin right now?

**Dr. Gedroic:** We think in compartments today with medicine. Your focus, of course, is on eye health. There are cardiologists on heart health, neurologists on brain health, and so on and so forth.

We're not globally translating these disease processes into overall wellness. Therefore, any time a patient is labeled with a disease process, they have to translate that into knowing the fundamentals are off. There's inflammation in their gut, and that's translating at some level. Some are more direct connections than others, but at some level, the inflammation is starting in their gut. They may be prescribed a pill that helps them. Ultimately, to recover from that illness, they have to start looking closely at what they're putting in their mouth because it starts there.

It's simple. You just go back to what your grandparents were eating: farm to table. If you look at the label and can't pronounce what's on it, you probably shouldn't put it in your mouth. You do the best you can. We all have different budgets, so we have to make choices. Some of us have to be stricter than others, but you do the best you can to make the choices that keep you healthy. That's where it starts.

All these other things are ways to expand upon that, like culturing your vegetables or culturing foods in general. It's a beautiful hobby to have and not expensive. That's an easy way to keep your health on track.

At the conference, I gave a little vignette that is very dear to my heart. My middle son ate a bad piece of food. Others had gotten food poisoning, and I didn't catch him in time. He chose not to eat dinner that night but instead walked himself to the refrigerator and poured himself a whole glass of cultured vegetable juice. He went upstairs and went to bed, and he never got sick. That speaks volumes to the fact that those healthy bacteria competed with the bad ones in the food he'd just eaten. They won out because he never got sick.

These are some of the closing points. We have to start making these translations in terms of our global wellness.

**Dr. Kondrot:** We didn't talk about the connection with a leaky gut and a leaky brain. When you do have pathology in the gut, there is an associated leakage and pathology in the brain. There's a correlation. Before we end the show, maybe talk about the association we're seeing with increased incidence with serious neurological problems like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease and the relationship to the gut.

**Dr. Gedroic:** This is a huge subject and a beautiful subject to explore. Dr. Perlmutter's work underscores the importance of the leaky gut and its impact on brain health. The light bulb has gone off many times, but it really went off when I realized that it's effectively the same membrane. From an embryological perspective, you're talking about a very big membrane, but it's the same

membrane. When the gut is leaky, the brain is leaky. I think that's a profound concept.

**Dr. Kondrot:** We're coming to a close on **Healthy Vision**. Dr. Gedroic, thank you so much for taking time. I really appreciate you sharing all this valuable information with us.

Folks, next Sunday is "Ask Dr. Kondrot a Question." We're not having a guest. You have an opportunity to call **Healthy Vision** and ask a question directly to me.

I want to thank all of you for tuning in. Until next week, to your good health and clear vision.

Dr. Edward Kondrot

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