

# What Is “Functional Medicine”?

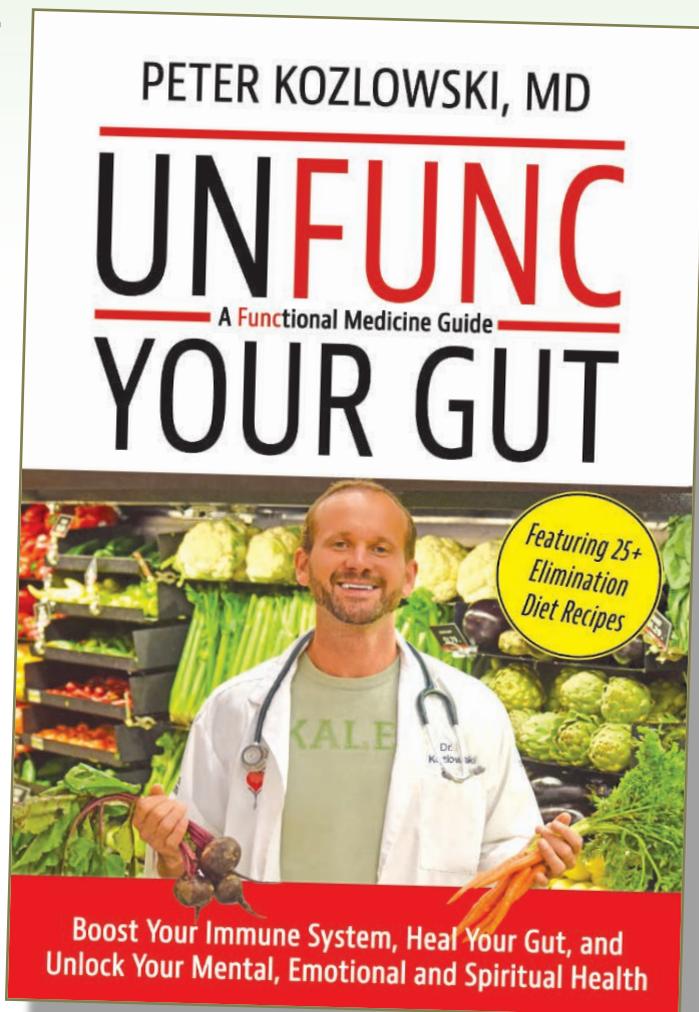
Dr. Peter Kozlowski

## A Larger Toolbox!

Functional Medicine is an approach to preventative health and chronic disease that is individualized to your story and your body. As a traditional Family Practice doctor, I was taught to listen to your symptoms and figure out which medication would help alleviate those symptoms. As a Functional Medicine doctor, I was taught to listen to your story and help you uncover what could have led to those symptoms and what is contributing to those symptoms lingering or worsening.

If you choose Functional Medicine, then the focus will not be on treating your symptoms, but on what could be imbalanced in your body and what can bring it into balance (and in this, the symptoms may be relieved in a more lasting way). What do you have too much of? Bad food, gut inflammation, estrogen, toxins, stress, etc. What do you not have enough of? Thyroid hormone, vitamin D, self-care, progesterone, exercise, etc. Hippocrates, a few thousand years ago, said, “All disease begins in the gut.” He was onto something because this is where we frequently start.

Functional Medicine gives me a larger toolbox than the one I left my Family Practice residency with. In the traditional model, we learn to take a brief medical history, make a diagnosis, and choose the proper medication for that condition. But I no longer believe that pills are the solution for chronic disease. I think traditional medicine is incredible for acute care. For example, if I have a heart attack, I don’t want someone talking to me about how much spinach I eat in a day; I want a cardiac surgeon to open my coronary arteries. If I break my arm playing basketball, I’d rather have a surgeon put my bones back together than to have the doctor ask me what my daily meditation practice looks like. But when I hear stories from patient after patient who has been diagnosed with a chronic disease, about how they went to their doctor and asked if there could be anything in their lifestyle causing or contributing to their chronic disease, and they were told no and shamed for asking, I tend to disagree. Functional Medicine is a logical, natural approach to diagnosis, prescription and healing.



Since many of us are being exposed to the same things, why does one person get sick and another does not? To explain this, the analogy I like to use is that we are all born with a bucket. We fill that bucket with inflammatory things like antibiotics, sugary drinks, too much screen time, french fries, breathing in toxins, genetically modified foods, unhealthy relationships, comparing ourselves to others, unhealthy relationships, infections, medications, etc., and eventually this bucket overflows into disease. We all know people living well into their nineties, who drink, smoke, eat red meat daily, never eat vegetables, and never get sick. But we know a two-year-old autistic child or someone who has a two-year-old autistic child. Or a thirty-year-old with cancer. So what gives?

Continuing with the metaphor, we are all born with a bucket that is a different size. The size of your

bucket is dependent on your genetics, which I call luck. Some of us are lucky and were given a huge bucket, and some of us are unlucky and got a smaller one. Some of us who have a huge bucket fill it up very quickly, and some of us with a small one never fill it to the top. Yet when this bucket overflows, it can present as “chronic” disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, chronic diseases are conditions that last one year or longer, require ongoing medical attention and/or limit activities of daily living. The goal of Functional Medicine is to identify what is in your bucket, empty that bucket of inflammatory things, and fill it with good food, good bacteria, balanced hormones, self-care, and love.

One question I frequently get when I do health talks is: “I am healthy, so when and why should I see a Functional Medicine doctor?” The answer is NOW! Because it is much easier to make changes to prevent disease while the body is healthy than it is to try to stop the progression of disease or get someone on medications in an attempt to reverse disease. Unfortunately, I have seen very few patients whose bucket has not yet overflowed. Instead, what I see in my practice is: Lupus, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Autism, Diabetes, Heart Disease, Hashimoto’s Thyroiditis, Infertility, Depression, Anxiety, High Cholesterol, ADHD, Fatigue, Obesity, Brain Fog, and much more.

Many of my patients have been to their primary care provider and multiple specialists. Some have even flown around to the best hospitals in the world to seek second, third, fourth, and tenth opinions. They have been told all your labs are “normal,” “It’s all in your head, so take an anti-depressant,” or “Try this medication” (even though it comes with a laundry list of undesirable side effects), and “By the way, you will be on that medication until it stops working, then we will add another medication” (with its own list of side effects). In response to asking their doctors if their environment could be hurting them, they have been told “absolutely not.” These patients gave up on medical professionals and got on Dr. Google, read social media posts, scanned blog posts, and watched Netflix documentaries trying to help themselves.

I believe in working together. My job is to help point you in the right direction and give you the tools to heal; your job is to take it one day at a time and make the changes that allow your body to heal.

A typical initial visit lasts about 90 minutes with Dr. Kozlowski and then about 60 minutes with our life coach. Prior to your visit, you will fill out about 40 pages of medical history that Dr. Kozlowski reviews before your visit. Follow up visits can be anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour or longer. ■

*To schedule a visit or if you have any questions please call Yasmine, Dr. Kozlowski’s assistant at 847-626-5758, submit a request on our website: [www.doc-koz.com](http://www.doc-koz.com), or send an email to: [contact@doc-koz.com](mailto:contact@doc-koz.com)*

*Appointments are available in person at 333 Haggerty Lane in Bozeman, MT, or via telemedicine. Dr. Kozlowski prefers meeting in person, but during this year, we have learned that visits can be just as effective via telemedicine as in person.*

**A**s a Functional Medicine MD, Dr. Peter Kozlowski uses a broad array of tools to find the source of the body’s dysfunction: he takes the time to listen to his patients and plots their history on a timeline, considers what makes them unique and co-creates with them a truly individualized care plan. Currently he works with patients online via his Chicago, Illinois based practice and in person at his Bozeman, Montana office.

Dr. Kozlowski did his residency in Family Practice, but started training in Functional Medicine as an intern. He trained in the clinics with leaders in his field including Dr. Mark Hyman, Dr. Deepak Chopra, and Dr. Susan Blum. His forthcoming book *Unfunc Your Gut* encapsulates his collaborative, patient-first healthcare approach—in true research-based, conversational style, it offers a blend of medical insight and the experiential wisdom of his own healing journey through addiction recovery.

Overall, Doc Koz inspires us to find real answers to “What’s going on with my health?” and empowers patients with practical strategies to achieve true balance of body, mind and spirit.

His expertise is in gut health, but he also works daily with food sensitivities, hormone imbalances, detoxing from toxic chemicals, such as heavy metals and mold, and most importantly, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.