



Practical strategies for managing COVID-19

Guest: Dr. Suman Gupta

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Alex Howard - [00:00:15]

Welcome everyone to this interview, where I'm really happy to be talking with Dr. Suman Gupta. Firstly, Dr. Gupta welcome and thank you for joining me.

Dr. Suman Gupta

Thank you, Alex. It's really nice to be here.

Alex Howard

So in this conversation, we're going to be exploring COVID-19 from a functional medicine perspective. And I know a lot of folks affected by the different sort of broad range of fatigue conditions can be quite nervous about what one might call being sick on sick, having another viral load, let's say, on top of the fatigue struggles they already have. So we thought having an interview, just exploring COVID from the lens of functional medicine would be a really helpful way of people just having a bit more understanding and hopefully perhaps a little bit less fear as well.

Just to give people Dr. Gupta's background, Dr. Suman Gupta is an NHS general practitioner. With over 15 years experience in the NHS. Her experience has strengthened her competence and skills in offering a combined conventional and functional medicine approach to health. Dr. Gupta has trained with the Institute of Functional Medicine and works alongside global leading functional medicine doctors and she sees patients from all over the world. Getting to the root of the problem is imperative, and masking symptoms without treating the cause only prolongs and worsens the complex of chronic disease. Evidence based medicine is at the heart of Dr. Gupta's practice. She uses thorough testing to understand the individual's biochemical complexity, together with 21st century genetics test to form a comprehensive, individualized treatment plan for patients.

So I think a great starting point, I'm always curious, Dr. Gupta, of people's journeys into functional medicine. You've clearly had a very successful NHS career, but something tells me that there was a curiosity or something that was sort of cooking inside of you that led you to go down this additional path in your work. What was the inspiration for you to try it?

Dr. Suman Gupta

Yes, it was exactly that. It was curiosity. As a diabetic lead within the NHS I was practicing functional medicine and educating my patients about nutrition and lifestyle. I was seeing profound effects. But at this point I didn't realize what I was practicing, had an entity on its own and was known as functional medicine. It was only when a family member was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis, a type of autoimmune inflammatory condition, that I began to research the link between diet and the disease.

And at this point, I couldn't find a single paper or study which linked diet to treating inflammatory bowel disease. Everything I read stated that diet has absolutely no role in the long-term effects of the

disease. And that just doesn't sit well with me because I simply couldn't accept that a disease of the gut had no significant link with food. And so I went down my own journey and started to research people's personal stories, and I found forums to be the most informative at this point and devised a nutritional protocol for my family member to follow. And this included things like bone broth, probiotics, eliminating inflammatory and processed foods and implementing some aspects of the low FODMAP diet, which can bypass the colon as well as supplementing, including things like, but not only limited to, vitamin D, antioxidants and omega 3. And just a few weeks after following my protocol, he told me that he's never experienced such good bowel function in his entire life and actually the bleeding and symptoms had completely resolved. And for me, this was a real eye opener.

And then it was following this that I started to help other family members and friends with symptoms and conditions such as infertility, PMS, recurrent infections, autoimmune disease, and even children with behavioral issues. And it was at the same time that my daughter also suffered from severe eczema. And I went to see every top specialist who told me that diet makes no difference and found that changing her diet, not only cleared up her eczema, but also improved other symptoms such as immunity and behavior.

And it was at this point that I was more and more curious and wanted to find out more and so enrolled on the institution of functional medicine course and started to practice functional medicine and have never looked back.

Alex Howard - [00:04:59]

I think that curiosity is something that is almost an irritation and an inconvenience initially for people, right? When you've spent years training in a certain modality, which in many ways, one of the sort of bedrocks of is following the rules and doing things the way that things are sort of written and structured. Was it challenging, that curiosity in a sense, when you were asking questions that perhaps colleagues were not asking or were sort of questioning why you were asking those questions?

Dr. Suman Gupta

Absolutely. Oh, yes, very much so. It's not forefront and actually, I felt like I was kind of retraining and undoing a lot of what I had learnt in conventional medicine. Looking at root causes, biochemistry, looking at where things can go wrong. And it wasn't so much about treating a condition. It wasn't about waiting until we get to that diagnosable state, but actually looking at things in the embryonic stage and prevention. And so it was a whole different way of looking at the human body and looking at health, really, and optimizing health and not just waiting for the disease to set in.

Alex Howard

Yes. Well, that's a good segway into looking at COVID-19 through the lens of functional medicine, because I'm curious from your perspective, having worked for many years in mainstream medicine and of course, I don't think one could question the amazing work that's been done in the NHS over the last year with COVID, but what are some of the ways that through a functional medicine lens, perhaps COVID is viewed a little differently?

Dr. Suman Gupta

That's a great question and actually, I would say for the treatment of COVID-19, that there's a strong role for both functional medicine and conventional medicine in the treatment. And I think both the entities actually recognize this.

So for functional medicine, it has a role in prevention of COVID by boosting immunity through lifestyle and nutrition. And we can also use functional medicine to boost the immune recovery and cell repair in non-critical symptoms after somebody has contracted COVID. And by this, I mean using things like vitamin C, vitamin D, omega, fatty acids and protein, as well as implementing a healthy nutritional diet.

Conventional medicine is definitely the treatment of choice in acute and critical COVID symptoms. And I witnessed this during my time as a front line urgent care doctor where it's lifesaving and it's when conventional medicine is at its best. But also in my private practice, I'm now seeing more and more cases of the long-term effects of COVID after the actual initial infection or virus clears, and that's known as Post-COVID Syndrome. And I'm treating patients with various symptoms, including ongoing fatigue, headaches, issues with memory and concentration, as well as low mood and anxiety months after contracting and clearing the original virus.

And for these patients, I measure where their biochemistry is at and use lifestyle nutrition and supplements to actually optimize their biochemistry and immunity in order to reduce that severity and the length of the symptoms. And I'm already seeing excellent results.

So in a nutshell, it's about combining the functional and conventional approach to prevent and manage COVID. And that's where medicine is at its best. And actually I use this approach the majority of the time for my complex patients.

Alex Howard - [00:08:44]

And I think that one of the differences that you're speaking to here is a more traditional medical perspective tend to be very symptom driven. So it sort of, it sees the symptom of breathing difficulties and looks for drug treatments to address that. And, of course, as you say, in acute situations, that's incredibly important and life-saving. But from a functional medicine perspective, one's looking more at the overall ecosystem of the body and therefore, one asks a different set of questions.

Dr. Suman Gupta

Absolutely, yes, that's entirely right, and that's why I say, functional medicine in prevention and actually those long-term effects afterwards are boosting the immunity and cell repair. But actually the conventional in terms of managing those acute life-saving symptoms. Definitely.

Alex Howard

And I think we're obviously still learning a lot. And I think the coming years there'll be a lot of looking back and reflecting on the sort of things that could have been done differently. But I think, it appears to be the case that overall lifestyle and level of health and wellness seems to have some impact in terms of the prognosis of people that are affected by COVID. And I suppose that begs the question, what are some of the practical things that one can do to, not necessarily prevent themselves from getting COVID, but certainly to optimize their outcome if they do find themselves contracting it?

Dr. Suman Gupta

Well, I mean, I think there's a lot that people can do, and again, it comes down to lifestyle and nutrition. And there's been a number of studies to support the role of vitamin C, for instance, in preventing viral infections. Vitamin D is also one of the most powerful nutrients in supporting the immune system. And I usually measure the levels of vitamin C in my patients before recommending a dose. But to be really honest, the majority of the population is deficient in vitamin D and so anything between 1,000 to 2,000 units a day should be optimal.

Alex Howard

I saw an interesting article and I don't know how evidence based this was. The article was saying that there seems to be less COVID amongst people that work outside, which of course, would support the idea that they're likely to have higher vitamin D levels. I mean, it's fascinating to think that something as simple as that can actually make a difference.

Dr. Suman Gupta - [00:10:58]

Oh, yes. And again, we're still in the process of collecting this research and collecting this evidence. But so far, the evidence is so strong for the role of vitamin C in prevention and in the recovery after the COVID has been contracted. Other things that play a strong role and still under this research and we still again, we're still, so much uncertainty about this virus and so much uncertainty about why it hits some people so hard and why other people less so. But zinc also plays a significant role in boosting immunity, omega 3, fatty acids. But we also now understand that really importantly, that 70 percent of the immune system is within the gut.

And actually functional medicine is all about optimizing gut health and by optimizing gut health, you're boosting up the immunity. And so I usually recommend eating the rainbow and trying to get all the colors on each plate in every meal to benefit from the different phytonutrients. And phytonutrients are vitamins and minerals within the foods. So for me, introducing phytonutrients you're really looking massively at the oranges, the reds and the purple foods, which are particularly high.

Other things are, rotation of foods, which is also key. So our gut is like an ecosystem. We've got healthy bacteria A, healthy bacteria B, fungus A, fungus B, and even if we eat properly every single day, bacteria A may have a preference for broccoli and therefore overgrow and not allow the other good bacteria to thrive in the gut. So it's much better to eat a little bit of broccoli, a little bit of purple cabbage, a little bit of carrots and a little bit of red peppers, which actually keeps the whole microbiome happy and the ecosystem in the gut really happy and thriving. And healthy bacteria in the gut is used to stimulate T cells, which are actually involved in fighting viruses. Junk food and processed food, and sugary foods, on the other hand, feeds the bad bacteria and can actually confuse the immune system, resulting in inflammation and hence weaken the immune response against viruses.

Alex Howard

It's interesting, the point of recording our interview, I'm about halfway through the interviews for the conference, and one of the key themes, I'm always interested, like what are the central themes across the different interviews? And one of the key themes is, just what you've been speaking to, the importance of fundamentals, that people can get very excited about the latest research or the latest miracle supplement or the latest functional testing. But there's something really important about these fundamentals of just making sure that we're getting the right nutrients into the system in the first place.

Dr. Suman Gupta

Absolutely. Yes. And again, you know, people's gut systems can also vary so much. So it is all about starting with the gut because that absorption of food can be different in two different human beings. And so actually, we're starting again with the fundamentals, with the basics, with improving the gut health, then absorption is also improved.

So in summary, in terms of preventing and boosting immunity, we're talking about vitamin C, vitamin D, zinc, omega 3, which all have a role in boosting the immune system. And then we got optimizing the gut health by taking a broad spectrum probiotic, by eating the rainbow, by the rotation of food, which, all of these things support the gut microbiome diversity and help boost the immune system where 70 percent of it is.

And then you've got the eliminating the junk foods and the processed food and the refined sugars, which also reduces inflammation. Other things are limiting caffeine and alcohol, optimizing hydration, but also lifestyle measures which we often miss out. So that's managing and reducing stress, optimizing sleep and regular appropriate daily exercise. And these are all strategies which really help optimize our body, help boost up our immune system and help us fight infections.

Alex Howard - [00:15:19]

One of the challenges at the moment with all of the, particularly anyone, and you mentioned you've got a daughter, anyone that's doing home schooling right now trying to get good quality sleep, good quality, exercise time with your partner, like quality time together. All of those things, I think, become really quite challenging. And I suppose what's important in what you're saying is that we need to do the best we can to prioritize those things, even though it feels like a time in our lives where it's quite challenging to do so.

Dr. Suman Gupta

Yeah, absolutely, and it is very challenging to do so at the moment, but, you know, we can, I mean, it's been sort of, it's meant different things for different people. And for some people, it has meant a little bit of slowing down in many ways. But that's not to underestimate the effect that this whole uncertainty of life and this whole living all together, having kids at home, it has proposed a massive stress for most people.

Alex Howard

It's funny, I find myself thinking that for some of us, it's a slowing down to speed up. It's a sort of going less places and less rushing around. But in the space at home, like more, I think for some, more of a sense of pressure of trying to juggle all of these different pieces.

For somebody that comes to you who perhaps has got some of these fundamentals in place and perhaps someone that, maybe a large part of this audience, who is suffering with fatigue somewhere on that spectrum, from mild fatigue to the more severe CFS/ME cases, and is looking to sort of go that step further. So when you're working with people in clinic and you've got the fundamentals in place, what are the next stages that you go in terms of digging deeper, either in terms of functional tests or in terms of digging below the surface in terms of what's going on?

Dr. Suman Gupta

So for my patients, I usually measure where their biochemistry is. I also test the individual gene types because we, that actually adds a lot of prevention into it.

Alex Howard

Say a bit more about that, because I think people are going to be curious. So, when you say most of the different gene types, maybe say a bit about what some of those different gene types are and the methodology of how you're measuring.

Dr. Suman Gupta

Yeah, absolutely. So, it can be anything. Some of those, I'll name a few genes that I would sometimes test for, but depending on the actual patient who is in front of me. So I tailor it to the needs. But for instance, APOE, which is apolipoprotein E gene, and that actually gives us information about the patient's cardiovascular risk and Alzheimer's risk. Not everyone likes to know that. And the purpose of the gene test isn't to say, do you know what? You're doomed. Here it is and you have a high risk.

Alex Howard

I'm so glad I came to see you Dr. Gupta. Now I know the misery of my fate.

Dr. Suman Gupta

It actually gives us information about how that person processes cholesterol and helps us to implement the right kind of fat diet for them and gives us an idea that we need to monitor their cholesterol more closely and also the risk for that. So adding in other risk factors so making sure that

their blood pressure is under control as well. So it helps us do a lot better with the prevention side of things with that.

Other genes that I might look at are MTHFR which is methylation, which again, is a bit of a buzzword with methylation MTHFR. But it does give me good information about how that person may detoxify or methylate and methylate, without getting too scientific, basically means how your body gets rid of waste in your body. Nothing in your body lives forever. Red blood cells live 120 days, oestrogen, and so your body actually needs to methylate that and remove it from the body. And so, does your body struggle with those pathways? And so then it helped me. I mean, I don't look at a gene on its own and I would then measure inflammatory markers, toxins and all those kind of things and build a really full picture of this person.

And then it allows the scientists the need to analyze the data and devise a prevention and treatment protocol that is tailored specifically to that individual.

Alex Howard - [00:19:36]

And I think it's probably worth saying that when we're talking about genes, we're talking about it, I think in the context of epigenetics, where it's not that one's genes are their destiny, it's whether one is turning on and turning off those genes. Right?

Dr. Suman Gupta

Absolutely right. And ways of bypassing it. So B vitamins can certainly help with certain pathways and like I said, monitoring cholesterol, making sure that their cardiovascular system is at optimal. All of these things definitely.

Alex Howard

Yeah, and I think what's happening as well for some people at the moment is that COVID is almost the wake up call, that people that perhaps have taken, maybe it's true of other areas of their life as well, but I think any area of our life that's been taken for granted and neglected over recent years, be that our relationship or perhaps our business or finance life, is being shaken in a sense. I think that's often true of people's health, that people that perhaps know that they're a bit more overweight and they should be or that they're not eating as well as they should be, that there's something around living in this global pandemic that causes a level of anxiety but also people see, people they love, going down with COVID and thinking, I want to the best I can support myself. And I'm sort of curious as to whether that's translated to you seeing people coming into your clinic that are, have somehow got a renewed sense of motivation, perhaps around their health.

Dr. Suman Gupta

Definitely, I think it goes both ways. So for instance, at the first lockdown I expected that, restaurants were closed, you couldn't order in, and so that kind of put, well actually you need to be cooking from scratch. And so for me, that meant, well are people going to get healthier? And I always just assumed that my patients were going to get healthier. But actually, I think the stress of the COVID, the uncertainty of it, working from home, you know, having your kids at home, actually put that added stress to the point where most of my patients, at that point, were coming back and saying to me, do you know what, I haven't been able to eat really clean and I've been drinking more than I should. And so I actually went quite the other way.

Alex Howard

Interesting.

Dr. Suman Gupta - [00:21:44]

Yes. But I think this time what I normally find is that most people spend most of December and Christmas wrecking their health and then coming to January, and dry January and all of that, and start thinking about their health. So usually January is quite a busy month. But actually I think from September to now, I've seen it quite a lot busier and a lot more people are looking at their health.

And also, I think there is the element of wanting to get healthier. People thinking about their health, like you rightly said, because of COVID and being forced to look at, how have I been living my life? But also in terms of having the space, a little bit more space to do that for some people because we have eliminated, for a lot of people, the travel into work. And so yeah, people are being able to exercise a little bit more and think about themselves and just a little bit more slowing down in that aspect.

Alex Howard

It's almost like in the U.K. At the moment, exercise is the only reason you're allowed out the house apart from going to the shops. Suddenly everyone is very eager. I've never been so keen to do the shopping, my wife's like, why are you going to the shops again? I'm like, I just want to go out the house.

Dr. Suman Gupta

Oh, yes, absolutely.

Alex Howard

So I'm curious as to, if someone does contract COVID. And obviously it goes without saying if someone has acute symptoms, they need to go down the sort of typical mainstream path. But if someone contracts COVID and wants to do the best they can, support themselves through it, what are some of the practical things that they can do?

Dr. Suman Gupta

So I think you're right, first and foremost is about following the government advice and getting testing and are isolating. It's also advised that we should have a pulse oximeter, and that's little device that pops on the finger and can measure the oxygen level. And it's a great way of monitoring oxygen levels at home.

Alex Howard

Just explain why that's important, because that was something that my wife for months and months ago, I saw one of the articles that came out right, I'm getting us decked out. Just explain why that's important in terms of assessing the progression of what's happening.

Dr. Suman Gupta

Decline, really. I mean, it's basically about being able to measure your oxygen levels at home. And that's what critical symptoms of COVID are about. It's the respiratory effects on it and the declining lung function. And so actually, this helps people monitor their oxygen levels at home. And anything that is low should obviously be discussed with 111 or 999. So it's a great way of monitoring that.

Alex Howard

Sometimes what can happen, as I understand it, is that it can go down quite quickly. And if people don't have that feedback loop, sometimes at the point they realize that they've got a problem, it's an hour or two or a day or so later than it ideally would have been. So there's a way of preempting that.

Dr. Suman Gupta - [00:24:37]

Absolutely.

Alex Howard

So what else, someone has got symptoms that are uncomfortable but are not at the point they need to be hospitalized. At that point, we've been talking about things like zinc, vitamin C, vitamin D, can people start high dosing those things at that point? And if so, how would they go about doing that?

Dr. Suman Gupta

Yes, but non-critical COVID symptoms, and so this is referring to mild flu like symptoms. I normally recommend rest being the first thing to do, hydration with clear fluids, but also bone broth, which have excellent gut and cell repairing properties, vitamin C, 1000 to 2000mg a day, vitamin D, zinc and omega 3's, which we've already talked a little bit about. Antioxidants also have a role, but to be honest, I usually measure these before advising. Curcumin is another one, which is the active ingredient in turmeric, and it's been scientifically proven as anti-inflammatory and immune boosting properties.

However, to be honest, it can interact with some medication. So it does need to be used with a bit of caution and through a practitioner. A healthy, clean diet, rich in protein and eating rainbow is really important for cell repair and immune recovery. But to be honest, a lot of people do lose their appetite during the first few days of COVID and so that can be quite hard.

Alex Howard

And when it comes back, the last thing you want is a salad, it's like, just give me the beans on toast or whatever it might be.

Dr. Suman Gupta

Yeah, but it's about keeping up that protein because protein breaks down to amino acids, which is really, really important for cell repair. And there's also a lot of evolving research for the role of breathing exercises and the beneficial role in maintaining lung function in COVID as well. Switching off stress, again, is a really important lifestyle measure to implement. And so just sort of powering completely down. Plenty of sleep helps us switch our bodies off, allows your body just to really focus on repairing and cell repair.

And I actually usually eliminate any form of exercise in the first few weeks of the virus. And even after this time, I advise gradual aerobic exercise. So just boring walking and nothing high intensity or anaerobic at all for at least 4 to 6 weeks. So this is actually a guilt free period of abstaining from exercise at all. And that's really because exercise can actually cause a stress on the body. And although a positive stress, when you're trying to recover it takes away from that recovery and cell repair pot and you just want your body to be able to focus fully on repairing.

We also can't really underestimate the length of time that it takes us to recover from a virus. And the common mistake that most people tend to make is trying to resume their normal daily activities and start heavily exercising too soon after contracting the virus.

Alex Howard

Yeah, I think there's something I'm hearing you say that's really important around one has to listen to their body. And this is such a big principle with people, obviously with fatigue related conditions, that you don't get better by pushing your way out. In fact, you normally go deeper in when you try and push your way out. That can sometimes be quite, I think, a hard shift for people which have been used to having this relationship with their body where it's mind over matter and I don't feel like going to the gym, tough I'm going to go anyway. Something about, to really improve one's prognosis that actually the faster recovery comes when you let your body lead the way, not your mind lead the way.

Dr. Suman Gupta - [00:28:28]

You're absolutely right Alex. But the problem that I find that a lot of people have is that they lost that intuition with their body, that connection of listening to their body, and don't always know what their body actually needs. It's almost, even like kids, if you watch a child and they seem to have like an orange day they either go for the carrots or the oranges, because it's probably a way of them replenishing on the vitamin C or the vital nutrients that are in orange foods. But as an adult, we've lost this instinct.

Alex Howard

Yeah, yeah, I think the body has an amazing wisdom and it takes sometimes a childlike mind to open to and to surrender that.

Changing direction slightly, you mentioned various supplements people can take, which can support the system. How important is the source of those supplements? One of the things that I get a bit nervous about is people go to the supermarket and buy a load of supplements and perhaps they don't realize that not all supplements are equal in terms of quality. Maybe you could just say a little bit about why getting from a good source is important.

Dr. Suman Gupta

Yeah, it's very important, actually, getting from a good source. There are some supplements that actually don't vary too much between sources. And vitamin C, I'm slightly less fussed about. Vitamin D might be something that's less fussed about as well. But other supplements can actually have forms. And I tend not to use multivitamins in a lot of my patients either, because what you find is that when you're trying to pack too many vitamins into one vitamin, what you get is a lot of binders, a lot of additives, and that can be the difference between a good quality supplement and buying a cheap alternative.

Alex Howard

Yes, yes. You mentioned a bit earlier that you've been seeing some folks coming to you with post-COVID fatigue or long-COVID, as it sometimes referred, what's your approach there? So I imagine it's quite a lot of the same principles that we've been talking about. Are you doing deeper dive testing into some of the, I'm sort of curious as to, in those instances, what that looks like.

Dr. Suman Gupta

Absolutely. And so deep testing, heavy biochemical testing is definitely something that I really focus on, but at the same time it's putting together that patient's story, which is really, really important as well. Is there an element of immune deficiency there? Are they on immunosuppressants? So we have to take all of that into context. But it is very much about doing, it's seeing where that person's biochemistry is at, where that person's immune system is at, and then putting that all together into context and devising a specific and tailored treatment plan for that individual's biochemistry, but also lifestyle as well. So, you know, can that person embark on taking X amount of supplements and changing their diet? So you also have to read what the person in front of you can actually manage and what part of their journey that they're at.

Because healing and a healthier, it's a journey. It's not a quick fix. It isn't like taking a quick tablet, and we can all be better and better even years on.

Alex Howard

And I think exactly that the danger is that one tries to do everything and does nothing, and it's much better to make a few sustained changes and build upon those ultimately over time.

I know there'll be people that are watching this that are already, as I mentioned in my intro, already suffering from fatigue and are perhaps understandably quite concerned about what might happen if

they do get COVID. Obviously, there are, you know, the evidence is still coming out, let's say, in terms of different illness populations, let's say in terms of if they have a different prognosis, but maybe a few words of reassurance that you can give to people that, there are practical strategies that they can do.

And actually one of the things that strikes me is that a lot of our patients are actually taking a lot of this stuff already because they've been doing it as part of their overall recovery journey. May put them in a stronger position. I'm not sure, but I'm sort of wondering what you would say to someone that's really quite nervous about what might happen if they catch COVID?

Dr. Suman Gupta - [00:32:58]

I think, again, it's about working on health overall and doing the simple things that we can all do to boost up your immune system and your body as a whole. You know, health is so, so important at any point not just from contracting COVID, but actually optimizing health at any point. And optimal health is about achieving optimal physical function, which is anti-aging and improving longevity, but also about optimizing mental health in terms of cognitive clarity and enhancing you. And so this is actually when we can achieve our full potential and live life to the fullest.

And many of us would have embarked on, when we embark on this healthier lifestyle journey will be familiar of the scenario where you go out for dinner with your friends and your friend orders a pizza or a burger and you order a salad or you skip desert and your friend says to you, oh live a little. What does this actually mean? We're living when we have health, and so the response is, well, actually, I'm going to be living more than a little. And so actually, our health journey starts now, however little, however big. And like I said, simple strategies like, recognizing stress, recognizing stress triggers, using simple strategies to work through stress, human connections. And now we're doing it all through video so nobody is too far away. So that's one thing.

The other thing that I often advise my patients is also about meditation. And I normally recommend 2 to 5 minutes a day. No more and no less, because people, a lot of people find the thought of meditating really daunting and actually kind of feel that they have to spend long periods of time clearing their mind completely. And actually, it's just about sitting with yourself and achieving the stillness in your day for even a short period of time. And so, even the small measures can mean that you are in a better place if you were to contract COVID.

But also in terms of everything else, it improves resilience, it improves energy levels and all of those things. But I think when it comes to supplements, I'm always a little bit more cautious and normally recommend measuring and working with a functional medicine practitioner.

Alex Howard

That's fantastic. I'm mindful of time, but Dr. Gupta, people that want to find out more about you and your work, what's the best place for them to go to do so?

Dr. Suman Gupta

So I do actually have a website, functionaldocctor.co.uk, which has more information about my methods and how I work. Also an [Instagram page](#). And as mentioned throughout, I use a lot of heavy biochemical, gene, hormonal and gut testing. And as a scientist, I love this approach because I get to work with biochemistry with numbers and it helps me devise treatment plans. But also I tend to combine the functional approach with the conventional approach, which is what I think is medicine at it's best in achieving optimal health.

I think what you are doing is great about putting the word out there about functional medicine and educating people. So thank you. And other social media platforms are also a great way of people sharing their stories and spreading the word about functional medicine and having this ripple effect for optimizing health. 95 percent, actually, of my patients are through word of mouth and so this just confirms the effect of sharing our health stories and spreading the word out there and how powerful it is.

IFM so the Institution of Functional Medicine also has a great website, IFM.org, which lists the functional medicine practitioner and has a lot of information about functional medicine and how it works. There's a lot of science to back the functional medicine approach, so that's another great way of people finding out more and also finding a suitable functional practitioner.

Alex Howard

Amazing. Dr. Gupta, thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it. I hope people feel a bit more informed and hopefully perhaps a little bit less daunted and realizing there really are practical things that people can do. So, thank you so much for your time.

Dr. Suman Gupta

And thank you.