

Gerson Therapy: Separating fact from fiction

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Top Five Facts about Gerson Therapy

1. Gerson Therapy is suggested to be a metabolic therapy, using a special diet, plus supplements and a coffee enema, to fight cancer.
2. The Gerson diet is naturally high in vitamins, minerals, enzymes, micro-nutrients, and extremely low in sodium, fats, and proteins.
3. The Gerson diet is more than just what to eat and what not to eat, it is when the foods are eaten, how often they are eaten, how they are prepared, how not to prepare them, what to cook them in, how to package them, and more.
4. One of the main benefits of the Gerson Therapy is its theorized rapid elevation of the pH, or alkalinity, of the body.
5. Dr. Gerson's research suggested that degenerative and chronic diseases are caused by toxicity and nutritional deficiency.



The Gerson Therapy was one of the first natural cancer therapeutics and has been used by patients for more than 80 years. Rooted in an organic, plant-based diet, raw juices, coffee enemas, and natural supplements, the Gerson Therapy is said to restore the body's ability to heal itself.

The Gerson diet is naturally high in vitamins, minerals, enzymes, micro-nutrients, and extremely low in sodium, fats, and proteins. A typical daily diet for a Gerson patient on the full therapy regimen features glasses of fresh, raw carrot-apple and green-leaf juices prepared hourly from fresh, organic fruits and vegetables; plant-based meals, freshly prepared from organically grown fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; and fresh fruit and vegetables available at all hours for snacking, in addition to the regular diet. [1]

Generally, a meal will include salad, cooked vegetables, baked potatoes, Hippocrates soup, and juice.



The Gerson Institute, a non-profit organization in San Diego, is dedicated to providing education and training in the Gerson Therapy. The institute provides referrals to licensed clinics, practitioners, and home set-up trainers. There are two licensed Gerson clinics: the Gerson Clinic in Mexico and the Gerson Health Centre in Hungary.



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The Gerson diet is extremely detailed. It is not just the foods that are included and excluded; it is when the foods are eaten, how often they are eaten, how they are prepared, how not to prepare them, what to cook them in, how to package them, etc.

About Dr. Max Gerson

Dr. Max Gerson was born in Wongrowitz, Germany, in 1881. He attended the universities of Breslau, Wuerzburg, Berlin, and Freiburg, and graduated in 1909.

With Germany in the grip of Adolph Hitler's Nazi regime, Dr. Gerson left the country for Vienna in 1933. He also lived for a short time in France and England. Arriving in the United States in 1936, Dr. Gerson was licensed to practice in the state of New York in '38 and became a U.S. citizen in 1942.

In 1946, Dr. Gerson appeared before the Pepper-Neely Congressional Subcommittee, during hearings on a bill to fund cancer treatment research:

[Case history of 10 cancer patients clinical observations theoretical considerations and summary](#)

In 1958, after 30 years of clinical experimentation, Dr. Gerson published [A Cancer Therapy: Results of 50 Cases](#) to detail his theories, treatment, and results.

Dr. Gerson's research included soil issues, the electricity of cells, how cancer cells ferment [glucose](#), oxidizing enzymes, sodium/potassium balance, connective tissue, and other technical issues related to cancer. His treatment and approach were a “whole body” approach.



He was focused on treating the liver. Several chapters of his book deal with various aspects of the organ. Dr. Gerson saw a parallel between the deterioration of the liver and the growth and progression of cancer. Because of his concern for liver problems, he did not favor fasting.

Dr. Gerson was also interested in the potassium group of minerals versus the sodium group. He favored the potassium group for treating cancer and his diet forbids adding salt to foods. The ratio of potassium to sodium was something he emphasized several times.

Howard Straus, the grandson of Dr. Gerson, chronicles the trailblazer's life and development of his therapy in *Dr. Max Gerson: Healing the Hopeless*.

The biography discusses the development of Dr. Gerson's dietary therapy and the struggles he faced in challenging orthodox medicine with a nutritional protocol.

Even in the 1950s, Dr. Gerson was aware of the importance of organic foods. He felt that general farming practices left the plants — such as carrots — without enough nutrients, and that damage was done to foods by the way they were processed and packaged.

“Stay close to nature and her eternal laws will protect you.”

— *Dr. Max Gerson*

Dr. Gerson emigrated to the United States in 1936 and passed the medical board examination. Ten years later, he was front and center on Capitol Hill. Dr. Gerson appeared before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the U.S. Senate.



He addressed the Pepper-Neely subcommittee on behalf of S. 1875, a bill ostentatiously set forth to “authorize and request the President to undertake to mobilize at some convenient place in the United States an adequate number of the world's outstanding experts, and coordinate and utilize their services in a supreme endeavor to discover a means of curing and preventing cancer.”

Dr. Gerson began his testimony with a recap of his background and his credentials — a member of the AMA, Medical Society of New York State, and Medical Society of New York County — and then addressed his approach to treating patients.

“The dietetic treatment, which has for many years been known as the ‘Gerson diet,’ was developed first to relieve my own severe migraine condition,” Dr. Gerson said. “Then it was successfully applied to patients

with allergic conditions such as asthma as well as diseases of the intestinal tract and the liver pancreas apparatus. By chance, a patient with lupus vulgaris [skin tuberculosis] was cured following the use of the diet. After this success, the dietetic treatment was used in all other kinds of tuberculosis — bones, kidneys, eyes, lungs, and so forth.”

Dr. Gerson added that his first cancer patient (bile ducts) was treated in 1928 with success. Seven favorable cases followed out of 12 and remained free of symptoms up to 7½ years.

During testimony Dr. Gerson noted that his diet protocol is condensed into three components:

- The elimination of [toxins](#) and poisons and returning of the displaced “extracellular” Na-group, connected with toxins, poisons, edema, destructive inflammation, from the tissues, tumors, and organs where it does not belong, into the serum and tissues where it belongs — gall bladder with bile ducts. connective tissue, thyroid, stomach mucosa, kidney medulla, tumors, and so forth.
- Bringing back the lost “intracellular” K-group combined with vitamins, enzymes, ferments, sugar, and so forth, into the tissues organs where it belongs — liver, muscles. heart, brain, kidney cortex, and so forth. On this basis, [iodine](#), ineffective before, is made effective, continuously added in new amounts.
- Restoring the differentiation, tonus, tension, oxidation, and so forth, by activated iodine, where there were before growing tumors and metastases with de-differentiation, loss of tension, oxidation, loss of resistance, and healing power.

“The great number of chronic diseases which responded to the dietetic treatment showed clearly that the human body lost part of its resistance and healing power, as He left the way of natural nutrition for generations,” Dr. Gerson surmised.

[Dr. Max Gerson's testimony to the Pepper-Neely Subcommittee](#)

Today, the National Cancer Institute contends Gerson Therapy is “advocated by its supporters as a method of treating cancer patients based on changes in diet and nutrient intake. An organic vegetarian diet plus nutritional and biological supplements, pancreatic enzymes, and coffee or other types of enemas are the main features of the Gerson therapy. The regimen is intended to “detoxify” the body while building up the immune system and raising the level of potassium in cells.” [2]

The NCI also notes, “the regimen is empirically based on observations made by Max Gerson, M.D., in his clinical practice and on his knowledge of research in cell biology at the time (1930s–1950s). No results of laboratory or animal studies are reported in the scientific literature contained in the Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online database. Few clinical studies of the Gerson therapy are found in the medical literature.”

But that is only part of the story ...

“I see in him one of the most eminent geniuses in the history of medicine.”

— *Dr. Albert Schweitzer*



Maybe it was a coincidence

While speaking to the Pepper-Neely subcommittee in 1946, Dr. Gerson contended, “The fundamental damage starts with the use of artificial fertilizer for vegetables and fruits as well as for fodder. Thus the chemically transformed vegetarian and meat nourishment, increasing through generations, transforms the organs and functions of the human body in the wrong direction.”

Conversely, Dr. Charles Thomas was named to Monsanto's board of directors in 1942 and became a vice president the next year. By 1947 he was executive vice president. Dr. Thomas became president in 1950 and was named the chairman of the board in '60. He retired in 1970. It was this 30-year stretch of growth for Monsanto that laid the groundwork for today's leading biotech behemoth.

- [History of Monsanto: What's past is prologue](#)

Consider this: Between the pharmaceutical industry — buoyed by the Flexner Report and backed by the deep pockets of John Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie — and the agri-biotech industry — led by Monsanto — it's not hard to surmise Dr. Gerson's opinions were stomping on some mighty big toes. He even wrote in *A Cancer Therapy*, "Our modern agriculture decreased potassium and iodine in our nutrition, precisely the minerals essential for prevention of cancer."

During the 1920s, Raymond Gram Swing migrated to radio, a burgeoning platform for journalists. After covering the 1932 presidential election, he was offered a job at CBS. Swing turned down the job and it was given to Edward R. Murrow. During the early 1950s, the now-legendary Murrow hired Swing to write news copy for him. 

When the Congressional Subcommittee concluded its work on July 2, 1946, Sen. Pepper recognized Raymond Gram Swing, "one of our distinguished radio commentators in this country." Swing said, "I think this bill is one of the most encouraging expressions of intelligent democracy. I hope that it gets the full approval of Congress. It has an inspired work to do, and I want to say in particular that before I came here today I have seen some of the cancer patients of Dr. Gerson, and I believe that research along these lines is so necessary and so hopeful that I am delighted that you, Senator, have had the heart and the courage to bring the doctor here, and some of his patients; and I thank you for it."

The next day, Swing addressed the Pepper-Neely hearing on his ABC radio broadcast:

“Let me first say that I well appreciate that one of the basic virtues of the modern medical profession is its conservatism. For without the most scrupulous conservatism in the statement and application of medical knowledge, there can be no confidence in the integrity of medical science. But for the very reason that the practice of medicine must be conservative, medical science must be bold and unceasingly challenging. Otherwise, medical science will not progress as it can and must, and will lose its integrity.

“A bill is before Congress, the Pepper-Neely bill, to appropriate a hundred million dollars for cancer research under Federal control. It proposes that the government go in for cancer research with something like the zeal and bigness with which it went for the release of atomic energy, turning the job over to the scientists with resources generous enough to solve the problem.

“This alone would make a good theme for a broadcast, just as an example of the use a great democracy can make of its intelligence and wealth. But the subject has been made peculiarly gripping by unprecedented happenings yesterday before the subcommittee which holding hearings on this bill, and of which Senator Pepper is chairman



“He invited as a witness a refugee scientist, now a resident of New York, Dr. Max Gerson, and Dr. Gerson placed on the stand, in quick succession, five patients. They were chosen to represent the principle prevailing types of cancer, and in each instance, they showed that the Gerson treatment had demonstrated what is conservatively called ‘favorable effect on the course of the disease.’ That in itself is remarkable, but it is all the more so because Dr. Gerson’s treatment consists mainly of a diet which he has evolved after a lifetime of research and experimentation. To say that Dr. Gerson has been curing cancer by a dietary treatment is medically impermissible, for the reason that there must be five years without [a] recurrence before such a statement is allowed. Dr. Gerson has cured tuberculosis and other illnesses with his diet, but he has only been working on cancer for four and a half years.

“Let me say right away that I am not discussing this Gerson diet as a cancer cure-all. It has produced remarkable results. It also has the failures in its records, which anything as yet unperfected is bound to show. It is not something that offers release from the most rigorous and conservative medical observance in its acceptance and application. Whenever something new and promising comes up in medicine, the temptation of the outsider and even some physicians is to run to glowing superlatives and expect too much from it. But anything that offers even a possibility of treating successfully at least some of the four hundred thousand existing cancer cases in this country is stirring news, no matter how conservatively it is formulated.

“There would be no Pepper-Neely bill to appropriate a hundred million dollars for cancer research if the existing research were coping with the need.”

Less than two weeks later, Swing was out of a job. Politics — not the kind on Capitol Hill but the even seedier corporate greed of pay-for-play politics — were his undoing.

According to Dr. Gerson’s daughter, Charlotte, “The executive directors of pharmaceutical companies producing cytotoxic agents for cancer treatment — members of the PMA [Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association] — threatened to cancel all radio advertising contracts for their drugs sold over the counter, an annual loss in revenue for ABC amounting to tens of millions of dollars.” [3]



It begs the question: What happened to the Senate’s 277-page Pepper-Neely anticancer bill of 1946 (Document No. 89471)? Augustus E. Giegengack, the Public Printer as head of the then-Government Printing Office, boxed up and stored the paperwork. No copies of the report were distributed to the press. Few medical journals have even attempted to follow up on Dr. Gerson’s testimony. Document No. 89471 now resides in the bowels of the Government Publishing Office with little hope of seeing the light of day.

Dr. Gerson died on March 8, 1959. “My father, aged 78, was in perfectly good health when, from one day to the next, he felt awful. They tested his blood and found a high level of arsenic,” Charlotte Gerson said. The family did not notify the police. “We had our suspicions,” she said, “but knew from experience that justice would not be done.”

“While writing the story of Gerson, I couldn’t help feeling it was too shocking to believe.”

— S.J. Haught

Like father, like daughter

When Dr. Gerson died in 1959, Charlotte vowed his work would not die with him. She has continued Dr. Gerson’s work through the Gerson Clinic in Mexico and the Gerson Health Centre in Hungary. In 1977 she founded the Gerson Institute with Norman Fritz, president of the Cancer Control Society. The Gerson Institute established treatment centers and trained holistic physicians, nurses, and kitchen help in the facets of Dr. Gerson’s treatment.

Dr. Gerson’s research showed that degenerative and chronic diseases are caused by toxicity and nutritional deficiency. Toxicity is accumulated from the pollution in the food, water, air and numerous chemical substances absorbed from your environment. Deficiency is the result of a diet that consists of artificially raised, chemically treated, processed and flavored foods. After a lifetime of chemical accumulation and low nutritional support, your body’s defenses break down and the result is the manifestation of “chronic” disease.

According to the Gerson Institute, toxicity results from the “better living through chemistry” philosophy of our modern world, where ...

- Bug killer, weed killer, and chemical fertilizers are sprayed onto the plants we eat.
- Pollution is pumped into the air we breathe.
- Chemicals of all kinds are dumped into our oceans, lakes and water supplies.
- People are fed hazardous Fluoride waste under the pretense of being good for their teeth.
- Farm animals are given growth hormones so they produce a greater profit and antibiotics so they can survive their harsh lives.
- Pre-made Industrial foods are filled with chemicals that enhance taste so that you will buy more and turn off the “I’m full” switch in your brain so that you will eat more.
- Preserve and extend shelf life so their “merchandise” will survive longer on the shelf.
- Drugs are given for every ill, pain and strain.
- Soaps, shampoos, deodorants and almost all personal hygiene and cosmetic products contain degreasers, alcohols, parabens, fragrances, stabilizers, solvents and numerous other chemicals.



Nutritional deficiency comes from eating nutritionally depleted, genetically engineered, pesticide laden, salted and sugared foods, loaded with preservatives, dyes, artificial flavors, sweeteners, and thousands of chemicals.

The process of restoring your natural defenses and rebooting your immune system is simple:

- Drink flavorful organic juices throughout each day. The prescribed Gerson juices, made from organic fruits and vegetables, bathe your 100 trillion living cells in a constant stream of health-giving vitamins, minerals, nutrients, and enzymes.
- Follow an organic plant-based diet, with lots of raw and cooked foods. This floods your body with more vitamins, minerals, nutrients along

with the critical health promoting enzymes necessary to repair your body.

- Detoxify your body at the cellular level using a powerful natural process that flushes chemicals and toxins from the liver.
- Prevent depletion of your organs and interruption of critical biological processes by eliminating industrial foods with chemicals, preservatives, dyes and additives, animal protein, alcohol, smoking, drugs, sugars, salts, fats, oils, dairy products, fluoride, chlorine.
- Eliminate further poisoning of your body by removing the sources of chemicals and toxins in your environment such as household cleaners, fabric softeners, non-organic soaps and shampoos, perfumes and deodorants, and air fresheners.

One of the claimed benefits of the Gerson Therapy is its rapid elevation of the pH, or alkalinity, of the body. Cancer is theorized to not survive an alkaline environment, and the proteolytic (protein-digesting) pancreatic enzymes that normally keep cancer in check are reactivated in an alkaline environment. Additionally, the red blood cells that supply every one of our cells lose their ability to carry oxygen at low pH (acidic) values. When the vegan diet raises the pH of the blood stream, disease processes become disabled while the body's immune system, deactivated by an acidic environment, begins to become active again, attacking the disease-causing organisms. [4]



In April 2007, Alex Molassiotis, Ph.D., of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, wrote, "A considerable number of patients with cancer have used or are using the Gerson Therapy, an alleged anticancer metabolic diet. However, there is almost no scientific support for this regimen. Hence, the present case review study of six patients with metastatic cancer who used the Gerson Therapy aims at critically evaluating each case to derive some valid interpretations of its potential effect.

"All six cases had a cancer diagnosis with poor prognosis. Despite the presence of some confounding variables, it seems that the Gerson regimen has supported patients to some extent both physically and psychologically. More scientific attention needs to be directed to this area

so that patients can practice safe and appropriate therapies that are based on evidence rather than anecdotes.

“Although the effectiveness of the Gerson regimen has not been rigorously proved, equally it has not been disproved either. ... A definitive trial on the efficacy of the Gerson regimen is long overdue. Information from such a trial would be of great value as it would assist patients to make informed decisions, protect their safety, and add to the patients’ choices in improving their survival chances and quality of life in their fight against cancer.”

[Surviving against all odds: Analysis of 6 case studies of patients with cancer who followed the Gerson Therapy](#)

The [National Cancer Institute notes](#) that in 1990, a study of a diet regimen similar to the Gerson Therapy was done in Austria. The patients received standard treatment along with the special diet. The authors of the study reported that the diet appeared to help patients live longer than usual and have fewer side effects. The authors said it needed further study. In 1995, the Gerson Research Organization did a retrospective study of the melanoma patients who were treated with the Gerson Therapy. The study reported that patients who had Stage III or Stage IV melanoma lived longer than usual for patients with these stages of melanoma.



And yet, there have been no clinical trials that support the findings of these studies. Clearly, this begs the question: Why? The short answer: Drug companies are not interested in medicines that cannot be patented — and nature cannot be patented.

However, there have been [curricular suggestions for U.S. medical schools](#), including:

- Teach holistically — Students should be required to take courses in nutrition, exercise, stress management, and sleep hygiene.
- Test for nutritional knowledge — Med schools should consider competency examinations that cover factual knowledge and

students' ability to give sound advice on nutrition and wellness. These classes can operate as prerequisites for professional certification.

- Use teaching kitchens as laboratories — Can combining anatomy with culinary lessons actually teach students about the dietary impact of foods? This question has been the impetus for medical schools across the country that are taking students from the classroom to the kitchen for a taste of experiential learning.

If they get busy now, they only have about a century of work to catch up on Dr. Gerson ...

“They have more money, they lobbied more, and got the law passed in their favor.”

— Dr. Richard Schulze



To Gerson or not to Gerson

What are the Gerson Therapy merits? Keeping in mind that choosing a dietary and lifestyle protocol is highly specific to your situation, the Gerson Therapy may — or may not! — be right for you.

From the time you are diagnosed with cancer, you have a myriad of options. Your oncologist will explore these with you, and you may seek a natural-minded physician on top of that counsel. The location of cancer and stage will influence treatment options no matter who you go to. Other lifestyle factors like accessibility to natural healthcare professionals, budget, and how much assistance you'll have will play into it as well.

Background also factors into your cancer treatment options. Certain things, like stopping smokeless tobacco when you have mouth cancer, are

obvious. But it can go further than that. If you've got stomach cancer, dietary needs may be different than that for bone cancer.

Charlotte Gerson

As you learn about and weigh protocol options, Gerson included, know that your options are not limited to your neighbor's or friend's options. Consider the evidence for and against it, and weigh what will be best for your situation.



Dr. Gerson developed his protocol on the premise that nutrient deficiency and toxic overload combined to create chronic and severe diseases, cancer included. These factors have only increased through the years, with both toxin exposure and cancer increasing in prevalence substantially since he began his studies.

In response, the Gerson protocol begins by completely eliminating sodium — a nutrient we have consumed in excess for years in processed, packaged, and canned foods — and bombards the body with organic fruits and vegetables, usually juiced, to the tune of 15-20 pounds every day. Supplements also are added.

Toxicity is a bit more challenging, as environmental pollutants are essentially impossible to completely eliminate. Rather than relying on avoidance only, Dr. Gerson hypothesized that the liver — our body's main

detoxification organ — could be supported. His method utilizes a coffee enema, intended to stimulate the liver to expel toxins into the intestines and feces to be eliminated.

Little has changed in the Gerson protocol through the years, with practitioners and patients claiming great success in strict adherence. This, of course, requires a great deal of support from those around the patient, as well as a financial commitment. As with any protocol, it is intended to be observed without modifications or combination with another dietary regimen.

With more than 50 years of application, Gerson's website claims successful treatment of more than 50 severe illnesses. Dr. Gerson was not comfortable implementing his remedy until he had some solid experiential evidence, so their long track record of success has buoyed Gerson practitioners.

Formal evidence, however, is not as clear. A 2010 review in *Oncology* details the Gerson protocol, notes claims of 70-90 percent success rates, but also notes that formal case reviews have found little to no scientific basis for Gerson therapy success. One of the studies reviewed had analyzed patients with pancreatic cancer. Some chose a protocol very similar to Gerson, and some chose chemotherapy — with chemotherapy patients actually faring better. [5]



The commitment involved in adherence to the Gerson protocol is intense — but most alternate remedies will be difficult. If you choose to amend your diet and supplements to pursue Dr. Gerson's remedy, be sure you have a strong network of support around you, preferably with a trained holistic cancer practitioner. They can help you monitor your progress, keep you accountable, and advise you along the way.

Cancer protocol is as varied as the individuals they treat, and this could be the remedy that you need while your neighbor or friend needs something else. Working with a holistic professional can help you determine the path that's right for you.

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