
GUT HEALTH

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR GUT HEALTH?

Our gut houses a vast community of bacteria that helps in keeping us healthy and disease-free. This is what we call the gut microbiome. It is important to know the characteristics of a healthy gut and the microbiome's role in improving overall health.

Signs of a healthy and an unhealthy gut

So, what does a healthy gut look like? An overall healthy gut has effective digestion and absorption of food, regular bowel and transit time, absence of illness, a healthy population of microbiome, and a normal and effective gastrointestinal (GI) barrier.

Having a diet that consists of ultra-processed foods filled with refined sugars and fats, chemicals, additives and preservatives can affect the environment of the gut. This contributes to having poor gut health and can lead to an increased risk for some health complications, such as unexplained weight gain or obesity, bloating and flatulence, constipation and diarrhoea, anorexia, acid reflux, heartburn, food intolerance, dyspepsia and irritable bowel syndrome.

How does it affect our mood?

There is a connection between your gut and brain, linked to your serotonin and its receptors that are mostly found in your gut.

It is important to note that serotonin regulates your sleep, mood, appetite, pain, stress responses and other bodily processes. Its production is influenced by your microbiome that also protects the GI barrier from toxins and bad bacteria, and they help activate the neural pathway between your gut and brain.

When the balance of the bacteria is disrupted (dysbiosis) and the gut lining can't function properly, it can cause chronic inflammation, impaired immune function, metabolic syndrome and mood imbalance.

TIPS ON IMPROVING OUR GUT HEALTH

So, how do we improve our gut health? Here are a few ways:

- + Adapt a more natural diet like the Mediterranean eating plan which greatly consists of fibre-rich grains, fruits and vegetables.
- + Lessen or avoid heavily processed foods that contain additives and preservatives. These foods can promote inflammation that can cause discomforts and illness in the long run.
- + Prebiotics are the ones that feed our good bacteria. There are plenty of prebiotic foods across all food groups that you can include in your meals, such as:
 - Vegetables: Garlic, onions, leeks, asparagus, Jerusalem artichokes, sweet corn, dandelion greens, seaweed
 - Roots: Chicory, konjac, burdock, yacon, jicama root
 - Legumes: Chickpeas, lentils, red beans
 - Fruits and seeds: Apples, bananas, watermelons, peaches, dried fruit, cocoa, flaxseeds
 - Grains: Barley, oats, wheat bran



FOOD & MOOD

COACHING

One thing these prebiotics have in common is fibre! Fibre is an important part of any diet, not only helping to maintain blood sugar balance and keeping you feeling full, fibre in fruits, vegetables and wholegrains help to keep bowels regular and of course feed the good bacteria of your microbiome.

- + On the other side, probiotics are a form of good and beneficial bacteria, which can be found in some fermented products like plain yoghurt, kombucha, kefir, sauerkraut, tempeh, miso, pickles and kimchi. Some cheeses like gouda, mozzarella, cheddar and cottage cheese also have good bacteria in them.
- + Avoid excessive alcohol intake and smoking. It can cause depletion of the bacteria in the gut and may lead with a 'leaky gut' in which the GI barrier cannot filter the food and toxins properly, which then go into the bloodstream.
- + Antibiotics can also harm your good bacteria so taking a probiotic supplement or dosing up on pre and probiotic foods following a round of antibiotics may be recommended.
- + Get enough good sleep and rest.

PREBIOTICS AND PROBIOTICS

PREBIOTICS

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- + **Grains:** Barley, oats, wheat bran

PROBIOTICS

- + Plain yoghurt
- + Kombucha
- + Kefir
- + Sauerkraut
- + Tempeh
- + Miso
- + Pickles and kimchi
- + Gouda
- + Mozzarella
- + Cheddar
- + Cottage cheese

