

HAPPY HEALTHY GUTS: YOUR GUIDE TO GOOD GUT HEALTH

Our health is believed to start in the gut, which includes the foods and beverages we consume and how they benefit our body. Certain foods can have a greater impact on our gut health and ultimately our overall health.

Our gut microbiota is a collection of microorganisms living on the lining of the intestinal tract. It has been shown that a flourishing gut microbiota can have significant benefits, including:

- Ability to produce certain vitamins
- Better break down of food and extract essential nutrients
- Build a stronger immune system
- Produce anti-inflammatory compounds
- Fight off certain diseases including diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and depression

PROBIOTICS

Probiotic-rich foods contain live bacteria and yeasts that keep the gut healthy. They can help build up or replace “good bacteria” that can get diminished after an illness or taking an antibiotic. Probiotics help balance “non-harmful” and “harmful” bacteria to keep the body in check. Keep in mind that there are THOUSANDS of strains of good bacteria, so it’s important to consume a variety because every strain serves a different function in the body.

Probiotics are found in fermented foods. Common sources of probiotic-rich foods include:

- Yogurt
- Kefir
- Buttermilk
- Tempeh
- Miso
- Sauerkraut
- Pickled vegetables
- Kimchi
- Kombucha

PREBIOTICS

Prebiotics may not be as well-known yet as probiotics, but both pre- and probiotics are needed to create a healthy gut microbiota. Unlike probiotics, which are live bacteria, prebiotics come from fiber-rich foods. Prebiotics are undigested carbohydrates in our food that make their way to the large intestine where they can be used by beneficial microbes already present in the gut. As more prebiotics are consumed, beneficial microbes have increase opportunity to use them as energy. Continued supply of prebiotics in the diet provides a competitive edge for a healthy gut.

Prebiotics are found in fiber-rich foods. Common sources of prebiotics include:

- Chicory
- Jerusalem artichokes
- Garlic
- Onions
- Leeks
- Asparagus
- Green bananas
- Lentils
- Black and kidney beans
- Wheat, barley, rye

HOW TO HAVE A HAPPY GUT

Maintain a healthy gut by following these lifestyle guidelines:

1. Lower your stress levels

Chronic high levels of stress are hard on your whole body, including your gut. Some ways to lower stress may include meditation, walking, getting a massage, spending time with friends or family, diffusing essential oils, decreasing caffeine intake, laughing, yoga, or having a pet.

2. Get enough sleep

Not getting enough or sufficient quality of sleep can have serious impacts on your gut health, which can in turn contribute to more sleep issues. Try to prioritize getting at least 7–9 hours of uninterrupted sleep per night. Your doctor may be able to help if you have trouble sleeping.

3. Eat slowly

Chewing your food thoroughly and eating your meals more slowly can help promote full digestion and absorption of nutrients. This may help you reduce digestive discomfort and maintain a healthy gut.

4. Stay hydrated

Drinking plenty of water has been shown to have a beneficial effect on the mucosal lining of the intestines, as well as on the balance of good bacteria in the gut. Staying hydrated is a simple way to promote a healthy gut.

5. Take a prebiotic or probiotic

Adding a prebiotic or probiotic supplement to your diet may be a great way to improve your gut health. Prebiotics provide “food” meant to promote the growth of beneficial bacteria in the gut, while probiotics are live good bacteria. People with bacterial overgrowth, such as SIBO, should not take probiotics. Not all probiotic supplements are high quality or will actually provide benefit. It’s best to consult your healthcare provider when choosing a probiotic or prebiotic supplement to ensure the best health benefit.

6. Check for food intolerances

If you have symptoms such as cramping, bloating, abdominal pain, diarrhea, rashes, nausea, fatigue, and acid reflux, you may be suffering from a food intolerance. You can try eliminating common trigger foods to see if your symptoms improve. If you are able to identify a food or foods that are contributing to your symptoms, you may see a positive change in your digestive health by changing your eating habits.

7. Change your diet

Reducing the amount of processed, high-sugar, and high-fat foods that you eat can contribute to better gut health. Additionally, eating plenty of plant-based foods and lean protein can positively impact your gut. A diet high in fiber has been shown to contribute tremendously to a healthy gut microbiome.

8. MOVE MORE...

Physical activity in conjunction with hydration reduces constipation. It can also help reduce stress!

“All diseases begin in the gut.” - Hippocrates