

Gut Health Basics

HEALTH BEGINS IN YOUR GUT

Good gut health has been linked to improved immunity, lower cholesterol, less constipation and diarrhea and even reduced risk of anxiety and depression. The health of your gut sets the stage for your overall health so you want to feed it well. Here are 6 habits to focus on that will help you improve the health of your gut and thus, your health as a whole.

#1: EAT MORE FIBER

Fiber is only found in plant foods - fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, grains, and beans - so work with your dietitian to come up with ways to enjoy these foods more often.

Habits to Consider:

- Have fruit every morning with breakfast
- Include veggies at both lunch and dinner
- Incorporate beans into your meal three times/week
- Snack on a handful of nuts
- Batch cook a grain to use throughout the week



#2: PROBIOTIC-RICH FOODS

Probiotics are live bacteria that reside in your large intestine. They improve digestion and influence the health of your immune system. It's also important to consume pre-biotics, the fibers that feed these bacteria, so they live longer:

Probiotics

- kimchi, sauerkraut, and other fermented vegetables
- kombucha
- kefir and yogurt
- miso paste
- tempeh

Prebiotics

- bananas (slightly unripe)
- onion, garlic, leeks
- asparagus
- apples
- oats
- dandelion greens
- flax seeds (ground)

Gut Health Basics

#3: EAT MINDFULLY

Bringing more mindfulness into your eating can help you stop when you're comfortably satisfied and prevent the stomach discomfort you experience from overeating.

Habits to Consider:

- Sit down at a table to eat
- Eat slowly
- Remove all distractions (TV, phone, computer, etc.)
- Focus on the food (flavor, texture, aroma, appearance)



#4 MANAGE YOUR STRESS

Ever felt nauseous before a presentation, or had stomach pain when stressed out? That's because our guts and brains are intimately connected. Stress can affect movement and contractions of the GI tract, make inflammation worse, or perhaps make you more susceptible to infection.

Work with your dietitian or mental health care provider to come up with ways to prevent/manage stress.

#5: STAY HYDRATED

Hydration is important for all body systems but is especially important when upping your fiber intake. Without adequate water, excess fiber can actually constipate you rather than keep you regular. Use your urine color as an indication of hydration status; a pale yellow color means you are hydrated, where a dark yellow color means you need to drink more.

Habits to Consider:

- Have a glass of water first thing in the morning
- Drink water with meals and snacks
- Purchase a reusable water bottle that you can refill throughout the day

#6: GET QUALITY SLEEP

More and more research is finding a link between quality sleep and the diversity of our microbiome. People who get quality sleep on a regular basis tend to harbor a microbiome that elicits more beneficial health effects.

Habits to Consider:

- Unplug before bed - screens keep you awake longer and disrupt your sleep
- Don't drink liquids an hour before bed
- Avoid having a large meal right before bed