

Gut health matters

By Aglaee Jacob

Why gas, bloating and problems in the bathroom are potential red flags for deeper health issues.

Gas, bloating, diarrhea and constipation are not always popular topics, but they should be, because digestive health is where it all starts. These digestive annoyances are potentially big red flags that your digestion is not optimal.

The tremendous importance of the connection between digestive health and the [health of the rest of our bodies](#) has been known since the time of Hippocrates over 2,000 years ago. Yet most doctors today don't usually dedicate enough time to ensure yours is working at its best.

Why health starts in the gut

Your gut acts like a barrier between you and the environment. Covering the area of a tennis court, your digestive tract keeps microbes and toxins out of your body while breaking down and absorbing the nutrients your body needs. Our gut health can also influence our [mental health](#) (and vice versa). The gut to brain axis connects these two organs intimately, and this is why improving your digestive health is a great place to start you're feeling blue, depressed or anxious. Studies show a link between the integrity of your gut lining and the development of autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, Hashimoto's thyroiditis (one of the most common causes of hypothyroidism) and many more. And if you need just one more reason to take gut health seriously, you should know it can also affect your weight. If you suffer from gas, bloating or abnormal bowel movements, the good news is that taking steps to [remove inflammation](#) and to balance your gut flora could make a big difference on all of these levels.

Remove inflammation

What is the first thing you need to do if you get a splinter? You need to remove it. The same is true in your gut. To help determine what is causing the problem, use the list below and focus on eliminating one group at a time until you can pinpoint the specific foods causing your discomfort.

1. Processed foods, 2. All types of added sugars, 3. Vegetable oils like margarine, canola oil, soy oil and corn oil, 4. Gluten (found in anything made with wheat, barley and their flours), 5. Gluten-free products made with refined ingredients, 6. Genetically Modified Organisms (the majority of the soy, sugar beet, corn and canola), 7. Meat and dairy products containing residues of antibiotics, 8. Pesticide residues found in non-organic vegetables, fruits, grains and meat.

Supplement wisely

Eating healthy will always be the most important factor to optimize your digestive health, but supplements can sometimes make the approach more effective and speed up your progress. If your digestive system has been suffering for months or even years, supplementing with digestive enzymes can give it a temporary break, helping you better digest foods (and absorb the nutrients they contain).

L-glutamine is also a great choice to support gut healing. This amino acid is one of the preferred fuel sources for the cells lining your gut, and taking it daily can help your gut strengthen and repair itself more quickly.

Balancing your gut flora starts by eating a variety of plant matters to nourish it, and taking probiotic supplements can be really helpful to add more beneficial bacteria necessary for optimal gut health. Make sure you choose a probiotic with a diversity of strains.

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