

Health & Nutrition Sciences

The Link Between Mindfulness and Gut Health

Gut Health is Unique

Gut health is vital to our overall health and well-being. Our gut, also known as our gastrointestinal or digestive tract, is a very complex system that breaks down and absorbs the nutrients that we eat and gets rid of waste products. Not only does our gut digest food, but it also communicates with our nervous systems, through the gut-brain axis, which plays a key role in immune health.

Dietary Components That Can Support Your Gut



Soluble Fiber is a type of non-digestible carbohydrate that is intrinsic and intact in plants. It dissolves in water to form a thick gel-like substance in the stomach, which is broken down by bacteria in the large intestine, provides some calories, and can help slow digestion.¹ Soluble fiber is found in beans, oats, brussels sprouts, oranges, and flax seed.



Insoluble Fiber is another type of non-digestible carbohydrate that is intrinsic and intact in plants but does not dissolve in water. It may pass through gut relatively intact, is not a source of calories, and can help with laxation and regularity.¹ Insoluble fiber can be found in wheat bran, brown rice, fruit and vegetable skins, nuts and seeds.

DAILY FIBER GOALS²



Females



Males

Age	Fiber	Age	Fiber
19-30	28 g	19-30	34 g
31-50	25 g	31-50	31 g
51+	22 g	51+	28 g



Prebiotics are substrates that are selectively utilized by the host microorganisms that confer a health benefit.³ Simply put: prebiotics are food components that the human body cannot digest but nourish the helpful bacteria in the gut. Prebiotics are found naturally in certain foods such as oats, bananas, onions, garlic, chicory root, and wheat.⁴



Probiotics are living microorganisms that, when administered in adequate amounts, help provide a health benefit.⁵ Most probiotics are bacteria (e.g., Lactobacilli or Bifidobacteria) or yeast (e.g., *Saccharomyces boulardii*). They can have a variety of health benefits such as helping to maintain a normal/healthy immune system. While not all fermented foods contain probiotics, some are fermented using a microbe proven to be a probiotic, or have had a probiotic added after processing in adequate amounts to provide a health benefit. These foods and supplements can be a source of probiotics in your diet.



Fermented Foods are foods made through desired microbial growth and enzymatic conversions of food components.⁶ Remember, fermented foods are not necessarily probiotic foods. Only some fermented foods contain microbes that meet the strict criteria to be called a 'probiotic'. Fermented foods like tempeh, yogurt, kefir or kombucha in the diet can help diversify the healthy gut bacteria and can even improve digestibility of the food if they contain probiotics.



Polyphenols are a group of compounds found in plants that have been associated with many health benefits.⁷ Most plant-based foods contain polyphenols, like vegetables, fruits, and whole grains making it easy to get enough in your diet but some sources are more nutritious than others. These include blueberries, plums, cherries, apples, broccoli, spinach, hazelnuts and pecans.⁷ There is no official guidance on the amounts of polyphenols someone should consume.

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3 Simple Ways to Promote Gut Health

1

Digestion

Nutrition: Get enough fiber each day – There are so many foods you already enjoy that contain fiber, but it's never too late to add more into your diet. To increase fiber gradually, try introducing a new fiber containing food every other day. This will help you reach your goals without overloading your digestive system.

Exercise: Incorporate movement throughout your day. Find a form of movement you enjoy and make it a daily habit.

Drink Water: Water is very important for breaking down food. As you add more fiber into your diet, make sure to drink plenty of water. Water will help to keep things moving along in your system.

2

Gut Microbiome

Diversify your diet: Try a new fermented food and mix it up with fiber. Grab a yogurt with berries and chopped nuts for snack or make a tempeh and vegetable stir-fry for dinner.

Consume foods containing polyphenols: Eating foods that contain polyphenols, like berries, nuts or seeds, may positively influence your health with the added benefit of fiber to feed your gut microbiota. Try adding these foods on top of salads or grabbing a handful for a quick snack.

Eat more plants: Getting more plants on your plate is a simple way to increase fiber. Smoothies filled with fruits and vegetables are also an easy way to add more fiber in your diet.

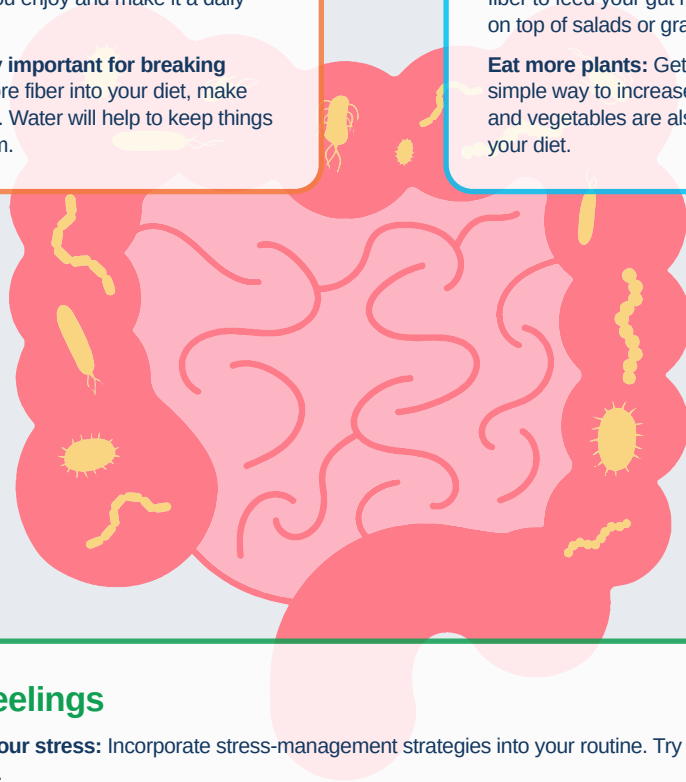
3

Gut Feelings

Manage your stress: Incorporate stress-management strategies into your routine. Try slow deep breathing or meditation.

Chew mindfully: Chewing is the step of digestion that we directly control. Take your time, chew food completely and enjoy the experience of eating.

Eat with intention: Before, during and after eating, listen to your body's hunger and fullness cues. Make sure you're not eating too quickly and pay attention to how the food makes you feel after a snack or meal.



References

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