

Your Good Gut Guide

A staggering 63% of Brits have experienced a persistent gut problem, according to a survey by the Love Your Gut campaign, but even if that's you, our guide will help to solve yours...

Look At Your Diet

Everyone's gut is different, and there's no one-size-fits-all diet, but there are key things to try. Studies show that people who eat plenty fibre, vegetables and plant-based foods have better gut microbiome ("good" bacteria) than those whose diets are high in red meat, sugar and processed foods. To keep good bacteria topped up, include live probiotic foods, like yogurt, and fermented foods like sauerkraut.

Be careful with foods such as onions, lentils, rye, cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, beans and dried fruits, which are poorly absorbed by the gut. They may pass into the colon where they are fermented by bacteria, leading to excess gas that causes cramping, bloating, wind and pain. Stoned fruit, such

as plums, peaches, mango and nectarines can also cause problems as they contain more fructose and sorbitol, which some have trouble digesting.

Most of us eat the same foods every day but, "the digestive system needs a wide range of food in order to absorb the wide variety of nutrients we need," says gastroenterologist, Professor Anton Emmanuel. So aim to eat 30 different foods a week in a kaleidoscope of colour.

Finally, eat mindfully, slowly, chew thoroughly and sit upright. Eat at least two hours before bed, don't skip meals and drink plenty fluids.



Sort Out Stress

Stress takes blood away from the digestive system that helps digest food, sending the muscles into spasm, causing stomach ache and cramps. This explains why IBS symptoms can be worsened by your mental health, say the authors of a review in the *World Journal of Gastroenterology*. "More and more clinical and experimental evidence has showed that IBS is a combination of irritable bowel and irritable brain." Try yoga and meditation, which help alleviate gut symptoms. Hypnotherapy also helps, suggests gastroenterologist Professor Peter Whorwell of University Hospital of South Manchester, who teaches techniques for IBS patients to use at home. Visit general-hypnotherapy-register.com to find a practitioner.

Wise Up On Vices

Smoking triggers and aggravates peptic ulcers and inflammatory conditions of the bowel and increases the risk of stomach cancer, says Professor Emmanuel. Drinking too much alcohol increases acid production, also causing heartburn and exacerbating digestive disorders - while a reliance on caffeine can promote wind and gas.

Consider choosing red wine rather than spirits: In a study comparing the effects of gin and red wine on gut health, the gin-drinkers showed a decrease in the number of beneficial gut bacteria, whereas red wine actually increased the abundance of bacteria known to promote gut health and decreased the number of harmful gut bacteria like *Clostridium*. In fact, red wine is better for the microbiome than grape juice, which also contains polyphenols. Just make sure you stick to a glass rather than a bottle.

And ditch diet drinks: The artificial sweeteners disrupt the good gut bacteria, which can lead to an imbalance known as dysbiosis. Drink water instead - it will help lubricate your gut to keep everything moving.



Make Sleep A Priority

Scientists suggest there is a link between the diversity and wellbeing of bacteria in the digestive tract and sleep quality. When researchers tested the sleep patterns of volunteers and their stool samples, they found a clear correlation between having a diverse microbiome and having a better quality sleep. Try to go to bed at the same time every night and set your phone to "do not disturb". Consider a prebiotic supplement, say scientists at the University of Colorado Boulder which can improve sleep. Try [Bimuno Daily](#) (£12 for 30 sachets - Boots).



Get Moving!

Exercise is vital for good digestive health because it encourages peristalsis – the movement of food and waste through the bowel. In fact, in a trial where constipated middle aged patients were divided into two groups, the group that was asked to walk briskly for 30 minutes every day experienced a noticeable improvement in symptoms and went to the loo more often. We also need to be active for our gut bacteria to thrive and keep the gut lining healthy. Don't sit for too long – aim to get up and move around every hour during the day. And, if you struggle with IBS, take up yoga rather than running – it has been found to be as equally effective as diet changes for reducing IBS symptoms.



Mind Your Medicines

We now know that antibiotics can destroy healthy gut bacteria but other medicines can also cause and exacerbate problems with the digestive tract. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), like ibuprofen, can irritate the stomach lining. Certain tranquillisers, painkillers, iron tablets and cough medicines can cause constipation, while antibiotics and blood pressure pills can also trigger diarrhoea.

Talk to your GP about the side effects and alternatives.

DON'T MISS IT!

NOURISH

Your ultimate guide to all health & happiness



MIND | BODY | SOUL

NOURISH is your ultimate guide to health and happiness. Available from www.dcthomsonshop.co.uk/nourish or by calling 0800 318 846. Price £6.99.