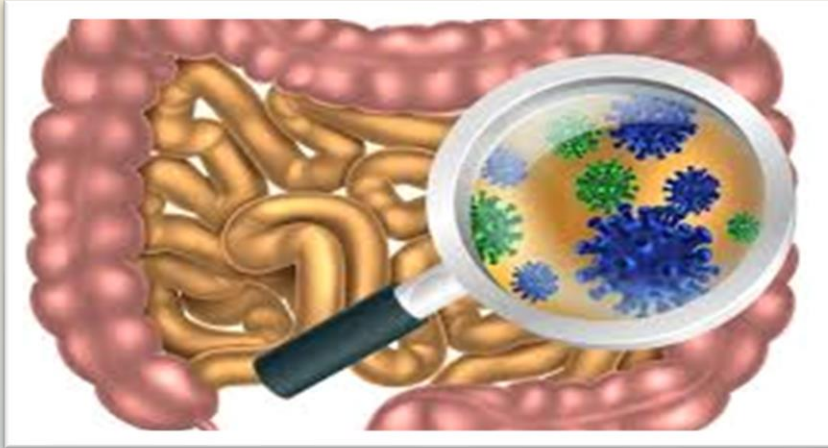


How to Have a Healthy Gut

"All disease begins in the gut," was written by Hippocrates over 2500 years ago. So the need for a healthy gut and the impact it has on your overall health is not new. But there is new research on how important gut health is.



Feeding the beneficial bacteria that live in your GI tract is an important strategy to keeping your gut healthy. To help this bacteria grow, thrive, and multiply one thing you must do is feed it fiber. If the healthy bacteria in your gut doesn't get enough fiber they die.

So what is fiber? It is the part of plant foods we eat that do not digest and absorb. There is soft fiber like fibers found in vegetables, oatmeal, or the pectin in an apple. There are hard fibers such as the coating of corn kernels or the strings on celery. Eating a variety of both will increase the type and number of healthy bacteria in your gut.

In America our intake is high in animal protein, fat-rich foods, and sugar. This starves our gut bacteria and our health is paying the price. Your fiber intake should be over 40 grams a day! This looks like 1 cup of beans, 4 servings of fruit, 4 cups of vegetables, and handful of nuts or seeds in a day. Just eating beans dramatically increases healthy gut bacteria populations and decreases the number of harmful bacteria within just a few days.

If you suffer from bloating, regular diarrhea, colitis, IBS, heart burn, Celiac's or Crohn's disease choosing a rainbow off colors in your vegetables and fruits provides you with the growth of healthy bacteria and powerful anti-inflammatory properties. The pigments can help heal inflamed tissue in your digestive tract. Broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, all sprouts, berries, kiwis, peppermint, and turmeric all have especially powerful anti-inflammatory properties. (But of course, follow your doctors orders first)

Fermented foods like sauerkraut, tempeh, miso, kimchi, and kefir are another great source of the beneficial gut bacteria. They contain large amounts of beneficial strains of bacteria and the fibers needed to encourage growth. They are probiotic foods.

Is your gut in trouble? Because gut bacteria plays such a role in many metabolic pathways, symptoms that don't involve the GI tract may show up that you might not think would be related to your gut.

EXAMPLES:

- achy joints
- acne
- arthritis
- auto-immune disease
- chronic fatigue
- chronic low-grade anemia
- depression
- headaches
- heart palpitations
- hair loss
- mental fog
- weight gain or difficult losing weight

All of these are signs that you need to work on your gut health. I struggle with some auto-immune symptoms but they only flare up when I have consumed sugar and/or alcohol.

Know your body and listen to what it is telling you. You should be eating enough fiber to produce 2-3 bowel movements "poops" a day. A healthy gut will eliminate in 12-24 hours. How do you know? An easy test is to eat cooked beets (since they stain the bowel movement red) and then measure how long it takes to eliminate. Your BM should be in the shape of a soft banana.