

Wellness REVIEW

Gut Instinct - What Is Your Gut Trying to Tell You?

Good Guts = Good Health

The amazing gastrointestinal tract (GIT), or gut, essentially consists of a long tube within which the foods you eat are broken down so your body can absorb the nutrients and goodness they contain. A sign of a healthy gut is not only good digestion, but also passing regular, formed bowel motions and being free from uncomfortable symptoms. Bloating, intestinal pain, wind, constipation and diarrhoea are all signs of an unhappy gut; one that isn't working optimally. Unfortunately, though you are not meant to experience symptoms such as these, many people live with them on a daily basis.

It All Comes Back to the Gut

Did you know that the foods you eat can rapidly alter your gut health, and ultimately affect your health overall? When you consume foods and drinks that are detrimental to health (e.g. processed foods, foods you are reactive to, or alcohol), your gut can become irritated and inflamed, and you may experience uncomfortable digestive symptoms. More than 70% of your immune system is found in the gut; and inflammation is your immune system warning you that these foods may be harmful to the sensitive lining of your gut.

Ongoing gut irritation has been linked to the development of many health conditions, such as asthma, allergies, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and autoimmune diseases (e.g. rheumatoid arthritis, coeliac disease and multiple sclerosis). It can even impact what is considered your 'gut-brain connection' – the part of the nervous system that links your brain with the GIT. In these situations, people may find they experience anxiety and low mood when their gut is out of sorts.

Ways to Help Heal an Unhappy Gut

Certain nutrients and herbs can help to heal gut irritation, leading to relief from uncomfortable digestive symptoms, and improving your gut function once more. These include:

- **Glutamine:** this amino acid helps protect the lining of your GIT, leading to an easing of pain and uncomfortable digestive symptoms.
- **Zinc, vitamins A and D:** these three nutrients all contribute to healing an irritated gut lining; while zinc also helps support healthy digestion.
- **Boswellia:** a herb with anti-inflammatory benefits, to help reduce intestinal pain and discomfort.
- **Larch arabinogalactans:** an excellent source of fibre, which ensures your gut bacteria have plenty of food to keep them healthy and functioning well!

Your Practitioner can recommend the best nutrients and herbs to suit your situation if you're feeling less than your best.

Fibre Fuels a Healthy Gut

Eating plenty of plant-based dietary fibre (found predominantly in vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes) is a great way you can provide yourself with better gut health. Fibre promotes the natural movements of your gut, and adds bulk to the stool, helping to keep you regular as well as supporting healthy bowel function. What's more, the 'friendly' bacteria or 'microbiota' (the term used to describe the beneficial microorganisms living and growing inside your digestive tract) love to feed on plant-fibre – however, when they don't have enough, they can also feed on the protective gut lining, wearing it down and leading to irritation and inflammation. So remember, to keep your gut microbiota happy and well-fed choose from a wide selection of colourful vegetables and fruits, perhaps some chickpeas or lentils, and other plant-based wholefoods every day. Your Practitioner can help you create a fibre-rich diet that will support optimal gut health.



The Power of Probiotics

Probiotics are specific strains of beneficial bacteria that can also help assist in improving and/or maintaining optimal gut health by influencing your own gut microbiota. *Lactobacillus acidophilus* (NCFM®), *Bifidobacterium lactis* (Bi-07), and *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* (LGG®) are all suitable for supporting everyday gut health and function, reducing signs of bloating and discomfort, and supporting healthy immunity. If you experience IBS-like symptoms such as pain, speak to your Practitioner about *Lactobacillus plantarum* (299v), a probiotic strain proven to help reduce excess wind, intestinal pain and inflammation.

Have the Guts to Improve Your Gut Health Today

Good health starts in the gut so make sure you prioritise this vital part of yourself. Remember, even if you are feeling well – make sure to eat a healthy, plant-based fibre-rich diet to keep it that way! Don't forget to also discuss with your Practitioner which is the best health-supporting probiotic for your needs; or if you are having any gut troubles, how best to get you back to optimal health once more. Listen to the messages your gut is giving you, your 'gut instinct'. It holds the key to optimal health.

Talk to your Practitioner today about the right probiotic for you!