



Healthy Eating Tip

Food for Gut Health

In biology, the gut is recognized as the digestive tract, belly and abdomen.

Did You Know?

There are trillions of fungi, bacteria, viruses and other microorganisms floating around in your gut?

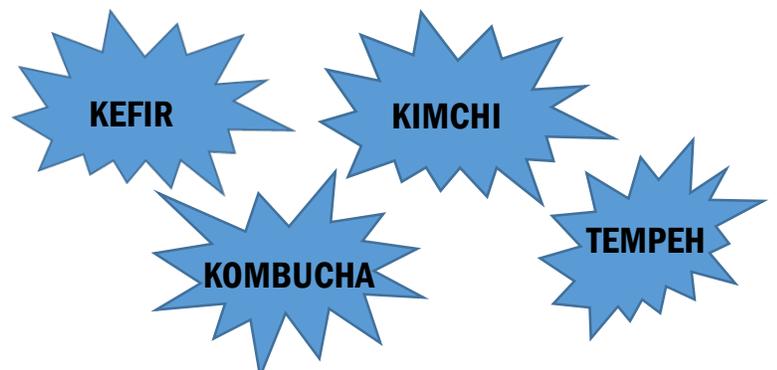
Do not be alarmed! Most of these microorganisms, or microbes, are the “good stuff.” Located in the stomach, large intestine and colon of the digestive tract. These microbes aid in gut health through synthesis of vitamins and essential amino acids. In addition, the microbes in the gut create metabolic byproducts from undigested food in the small intestine. This action benefits the structure and health of digestive tract cells, as byproducts create a barrier against harmful organisms and provide energy to the cells.

Unknown to many, these microbes play a critical role in the immunity of our intestines. They can initiate and terminate inflammation, and communicate with proteins that activate other immune cell responses.

What Does This Mean For Your Gut Health?

The state of these microbes affects your physical and even emotional health. The inverse is true as well! Your physical and emotional health affect the state of your gut’s microorganisms.

Your gut and brain are very connected! Studies have revealed that overwhelming stress and inflammation on the nervous system changes the composition of the microbes within just one day of the incident. Alternatively, dietary fiber aids microbes in providing energy to the entire body!



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Healthy Eating Continued...

Healthy and Helpful Guts

There are some bacteria that NEED to stay in the gut for optimal health. The *Lactobacillus* bacteria remain in the stomach, and release lactic acid that helps break down carbohydrates, proteins and fats. *Helicobacter pylori* are also a bacteria found in the stomach, but have mutated over time. In great amounts, this bacteria promotes mucous in the stomach that can lead to gastric cancers. However, fear not because foods such as broccoli and cauliflower can help undo *Helicobacter's* damage!

Check out **figure A-1**, on page 1 and **figure A-2** below, to discover a few healthy sources of this and other bacterium.

Protein

Plant-based proteins do not disrupt microbiota composition. Consuming pinto beans, black beans, chickpeas and lentils are a good place to start. They also are packed with fiber that is necessary for gastrointestinal tract movement.

Fats

Research has shown that diets rich in saturated fats (the bad fat found in dairy product, meat and lard) catalyze gut microbiota to promote metabolic inflammation [1]. However, eating monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats (the good fat found in avocados, salmon, grapeseed oil and nuts) have shown no negative effects against microbiota composition and has heart healthy benefits.

Carbohydrates

Digestible (starches and sugars)

Studies have shown that consumption of natural, simple sugars such as glucose, lactose, sucrose and fructose increases in the gram positive microbes *Bifidobacteria* and decreases in gram negative microbes *Bacteriodes* [1]. In other words, consumption of healthy digestible carbohydrates such as potatoes, or even milk if you are not intolerant, has shown increases of bacteria that promote a healthy GI tract and decrease bacteria that are harmful to the stomach.

Non-digestible (fiber)

Fiber rich foods such as oats, barley and soybeans have the ability to modify the stomach's environment and promote bacteria that help the digestive system. While it is a phenomenal nutrient, too much fiber can cause constipation so consume about 25 g of fiber a day, spreading it out amongst fruits, vegetables and whole grains!



Eat some of these to ensure your gut is in tip top shape!



Sources:

1. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5385025/pdf/12967_2017_Article_1175.pdf
2. Whitney, E. N. & Rolfes, S.R. (2016) *Understanding Nutrition (14th ed)*. Chicago: Cengage.
3. <https://www.drdauidwilliams.com/healthy-gut-bacteria-support-digestive-health>