

Eating and activity to help strengthen your gut



How to strengthen your gut

Your gut is amazingly responsive to both good and bad influences. Fortunately, many good influences can help you strengthen your gut, such as physical activity, sleep and healthy diet.

Exercise

Scientists are now studying the link between exercise and a healthy gut. Recent studies suggest that exercise enhances gut health in a variety of ways, including creating a more diverse microbiome. Microbial diversity is highly desirable in gut health.¹

Sleep

The gut microbiome is a crucial player in how often and how seriously we're affected by a range of both acute and chronic conditions. Sleep is one of many behaviors that build and help support a balanced and diverse gut microbiome. Getting adequate sleep not only assists with diversifying our gut health, but it also helps reduce stress, which may help prevent many gastrointestinal disorders.²

Foods

A high-fat diet can prevent good gut bacteria from flourishing, while saturated fats may increase the number of inflammatory gut microbes. Research suggests there is a correlation between a high-fat, low-fiber diet and colorectal cancer, the third most common cancer in the world.³ Research also suggests that intestinal bacteria may play an important role in the buildup of plaque inside arteries, increasing the risk for heart disease and stroke.⁴

You can help your gut by incorporating some or all of the eight superfoods that scientists believe may supercharge the gut microbiome. These are:⁴

1. Asparagus, Jerusalem artichokes, leeks and onions
2. Bananas
3. Beans
4. Blueberries
5. Broccoli and other cruciferous vegetables
6. Fermented plant foods, such as plain yogurt, sauerkraut, tempeh or kimchi
7. Polenta
8. Probiotics — Talk with your healthcare provider before starting a probiotic supplement, especially if you are taking other medications or have any underlying health conditions.

Sources:

1. Cohur, M. Exercise Boosts Well-being by Improving Gut Health, February 16, 2019. Available from www.medicalnewstoday.com.
2. Vernia, F., et al. Sleep disorders related to nutrition and digestive diseases: A neglected clinical condition, *International Journal of Medical Sciences*, 2021 Jan 1;18(3):593-603.
3. American Cancer Society. Effects of Diet and Physical Activity on Risks for Certain Cancers, June 9, 2020. Available from www.cancer.org.
4. Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. Plant-based Foods Improve Gut Microbiota Linked to Lower Disease Risk, January 21, 2021. Available from www.pcrm.org.

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