



HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR DIGESTION

Top Tips on
How to Love Your
Gut

TANJA ERWEE - HEALTH, WELLNESS AND
NUTRITION COACH



Did You Know?

The type of food you eat can dramatically change the bacterial composition in your gut to impact it positively. The microbes in your gut need a diverse diet of high-fibre plant foods, omega-3 fatty acids, etc., to survive.

On the other side of the coin, unhealthy nutrition habits can negatively impact gut microbiota. Unhealthy fats, added sugar, artificial sweeteners and processed foods are associated with poor gut health, an increased risk of obesity, diabetes, weight gain and heart disease to name just a few.

Foods such as whole grains, healthy fats, and a range of fruits & vegetables have been shown to increase microbial diversity, leading to positive health outcomes, such as improved metabolic and immune function.



Food Choices

It's Within Your Control

By making food choices that allow gut microbes to flourish, you'll naturally "crowd out" those unhealthy foods options without feeling deprived. You can start changing your microbiome within a few days of making dietary changes. It's never too late to start!



As Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, said:

“Our health begins in our gut!”



*Do You Struggle with
any of these symptoms?*

Symptoms of an ailing gut:

1. Gas
2. Bloating
3. Constipation
4. Exhaustion
5. Cramping/Abdominal Pain
6. Diarrhoea/Loose Stools
7. Reflux/Heartburn
8. Nausea
9. Cravings
10. Mood Swings
11. Skin Breakouts/Acne

It's Nothing to Be Ashamed of

- Having problems with digestion is not something you should be ashamed of but something you should take seriously.
- A change of lifestyle is the most efficient way to get your digestion back on track so you can absorb all the good nutrients of your food to ensure you feel your best!

You are not what you eat, you are what you digest

These days many people have problems with digestion and this is for good reasons.

In general, we eat too many processed foods, don't move enough (or at all) and are stressed for a good portion of our day.

All of this can lead to digestive problems which are a root cause of many diseases and food intolerances.

love your gut Eat Real Food

The easiest way to support your digestion is to eat real, fresh, whole foods.

Try to eliminate processed foods from your diet as much as possible.

Healthy foods are packed full of vitamins, fibre, antioxidants, enzymes without artificial colours, preservatives and unnatural chemicals.

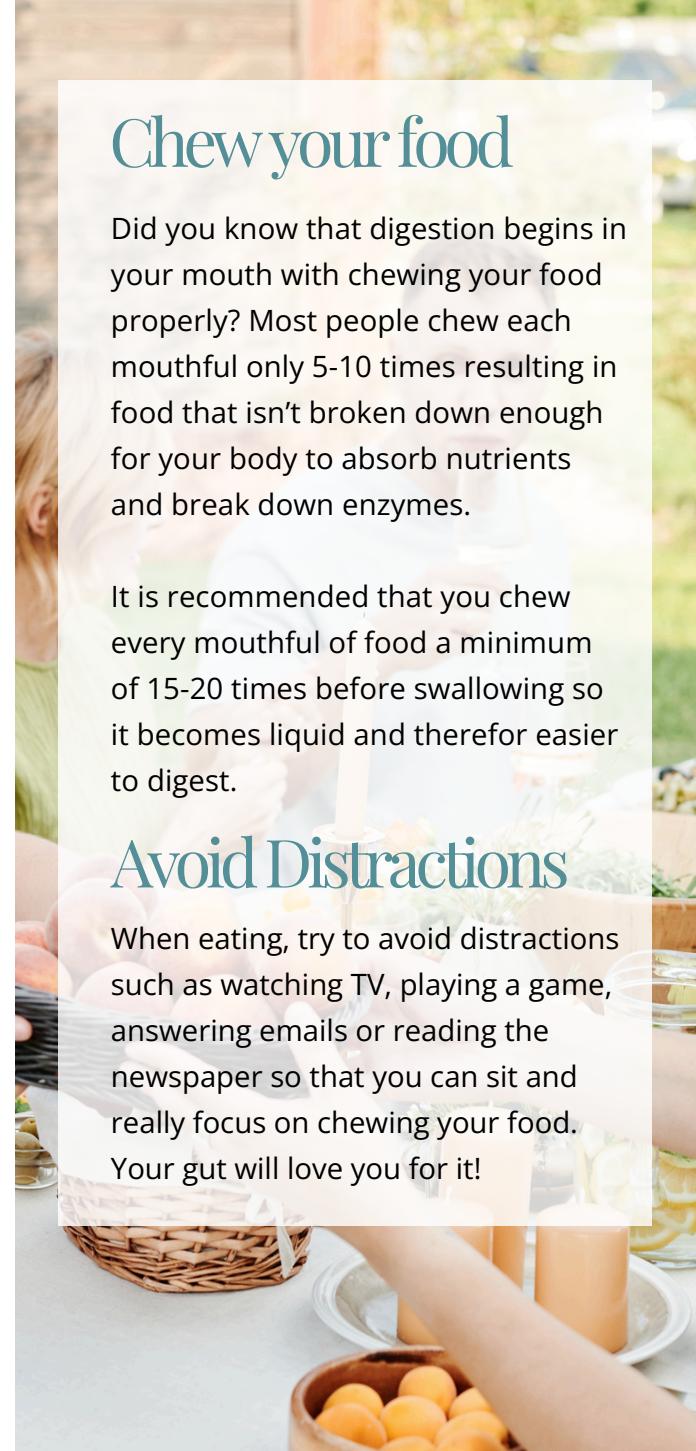
Chew your food

Did you know that digestion begins in your mouth with chewing your food properly? Most people chew each mouthful only 5-10 times resulting in food that isn't broken down enough for your body to absorb nutrients and break down enzymes.

It is recommended that you chew every mouthful of food a minimum of 15-20 times before swallowing so it becomes liquid and therefore easier to digest.

Avoid Distractions

When eating, try to avoid distractions such as watching TV, playing a game, answering emails or reading the newspaper so that you can sit and really focus on chewing your food. Your gut will love you for it!



Fermented Foods

Fermented foods are a real superfood for your gut and digestion because they are full of beneficial enzymes, B-vitamins and various strains of probiotics. These are the good bacteria that keep your gut healthy.



Natural Fermentation

Natural fermentation breaks the food down to a more digestible form that also supports the good bacteria population. Try to experiment with different fermented foods and include them into your daily diet such as Kimchi, Kefir and Miso!

List of foods

- Sauerkraut
- Kimchi
- Kombucha
- Kefir
- Pickles
- Miso
- Lassi
- Tempeh
- Apple cider vinegar
- Yoghurt

Get Moving

Sitting down and being still for long periods of time not only effects your mood, your energy level and your weight in a negative way, it also has a negative effect on your digestion.

Exercise

Exercise helps to stimulate intestinal contractility and speeds up your digestion. Aim for around 20-30 minutes of light movement like yoga, walking or swimming if you have digestive issues as these gentle movement can help your digestive system to work more smoothly.

We Need Good Bacteria

Some of the reasons we don't have enough good bacteria is not eating enough probiotics/good bacteria in your diet.

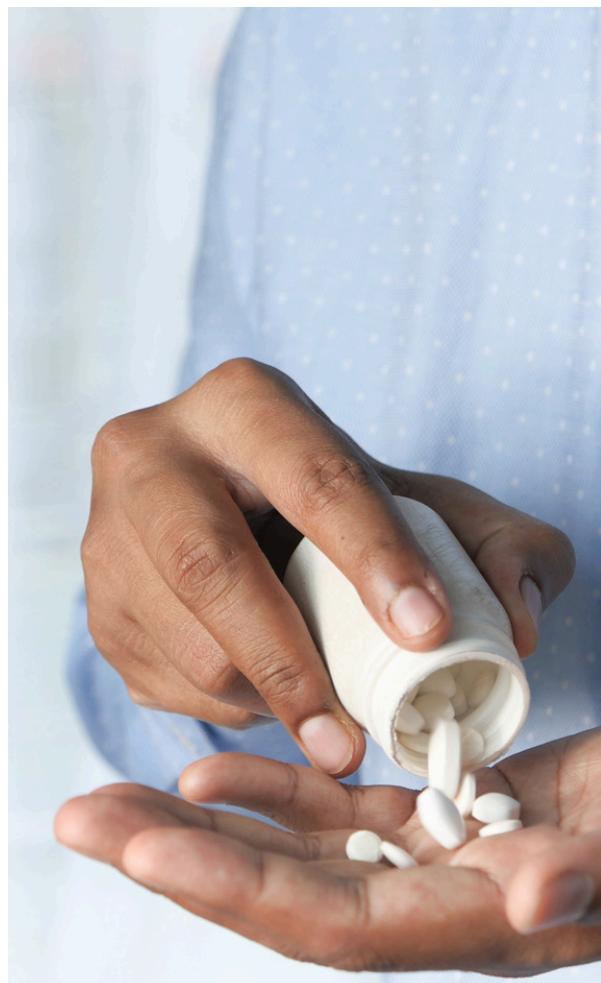
Some of the best food that have the highest probiotic content are kimchi, sauerkraut, yoghurt, miso etc.

There are over 100 trillion bacteria in our gut and they need to feed on something to survive...right? Their food is prebiotics.

Prebiotics is a term that defines a type of fibre that we humans cannot digest but is food for the good bacteria.



Antibiotic Use



Using antibiotics can upset the balance of good bacteria in your gut. There's a lot of evidence showing that antibiotics can change the mix of bacteria in your gut.

In a study by Panda and colleagues, they looked at the gut bacteria of 21 people after they took antibiotics for 7 days. The study found that the amount of gut bacteria dropped by 25%, showing a significant decrease.



Alcohol & it's Impact on Gut Health

Drinking alcohol can change the balance of bacteria in your gut. A study published in the American Journal of Physiology found that 27% of people who drank heavily had an imbalance in their gut bacteria, but none of the healthy people did.

There is some potential good news for wine lovers, though. Wine contains a compound called polyphenol, which might support healthy gut bacteria. However, research on this is still very limited, and most studies have only looked at specific types of polyphenols and a few types of bacteria.



Authors of the study also wrote

However before you get too excited



I would like to point out the following statements that the authors of the respective study wrote:

Their sensible advice goes on like this:

"Heavy drinkers should drink less or not at all"
"Abstainers (basically who don't drink at all) should not be encouraged to begin drinking for health reasons.

"Light to moderate drinkers need not change their drinking habits for health reasons, except in exceptional circumstances"



Smoking & your gut health

Recent studies have shown that smoking can change the balance of bacteria in your gut.

A 2018 study suggested that smoking affects the gut by increasing oxidative stress, changing the way the gut lining works, and altering the protective mucus in the intestines.

Another study found that smokers are twice as likely to develop Crohn's disease, a serious condition that affects the digestive system.



Sleep & Gut Health



Research is just beginning to explore how lifestyle choices impact gut health.

In 2016, Swedish and German scientists conducted one of the first studies to examine how not getting enough sleep affects the composition of the gut microbiome.

The study, although small with just 9 participants who had no history of sleep problems and only experienced two nights of partial sleep deprivation, found several important things:

- A noticeable drop in the amount of beneficial bacteria in the gut.
- Changes in gut bacteria linked to obesity and type 2 diabetes.
- A significant decrease in how well the body responds to insulin.

Additionally, a 2017 study from Kent State suggests that gut bacteria might play a role in the connection between poor sleep and cognitive decline as we age.

And finally, one of the important reasons which alters our gut microbiome is chronic stress!

Stress & Its Impact on Your Gut Health

Stress can disrupt the communication between your brain and gut.

Known as the "brain-gut axis." This disruption can lead to various digestive problems, including conditions like inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), food sensitivities, peptic ulcers, and acid reflux (GERD).

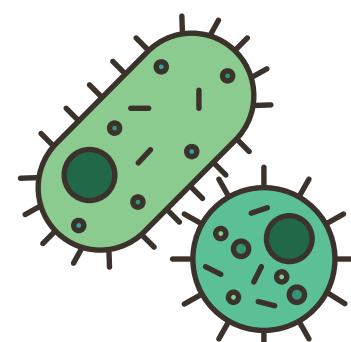
A Distressed Digestive System

Stress can have several major impacts on your gut, including:

- Changes in how food moves through your digestive system.
- Increased sensitivity to discomfort or pain in the gut.
- Altered production of digestive juices.
- Increased permeability of the intestines (often called "leaky gut").



- Slower healing and reduced blood flow in the gut lining.
- Negative effects on the balance of bacteria in your gut.





Our Digestive System Does So Much More

We now understand that our digestive system does more than just process food.

It also plays a big role in our mood and appetite. Our gut is home to 100 trillion microbes, mostly in our large intestine. There are about 1,000 different species, and two-thirds of these are bacteria.

Some of these bacteria are beneficial, while others are not. By making healthy food choices and living a balanced lifestyle, we can help ensure that the good bacteria outnumber the bad, which is key to our overall well-being.

Are These Habits Affecting Your Health?

All these factors we've discussed—like excessive alcohol use, smoking, not getting enough prebiotics and probiotics, chronic stress, and poor sleep—can lead to symptoms such as frequent gas, bloating, gut inflammation, headaches, and mood swings.

If these symptoms are ignored, they can eventually develop into more serious conditions like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD).



Mood, Well-being, and Your Gut

Improving Health and Mood Through Better Gut Care

Let's take the facts we've learned about our gut and see how they can improve our health, starting with enhancing our mood and overall well-being.

- Serotonin, often called the "feel good hormone," plays a key role in our body. It acts as both a hormone and a neurotransmitter, helping to regulate mood, appetite, and sleep.
- It's sometimes referred to as the body's natural antidepressant because of its powerful impact on how we feel.
- Interestingly, the gut is the largest source of serotonin in the body. It's produced not only by the gut cells but also by the microbes living in the gut.
- This means that a healthy gut plays a crucial role in maintaining good serotonin levels, which can positively impact your mood and overall well-being.

Approximately 90% of the body's serotonin is produced in the gut

Serotonin plays a crucial role in activating immune cells and managing inflammation in the gut.

Beyond its roles in digestion, serotonin produced in the gut is also involved in other important biological processes, such as bone health and maintaining metabolic balance.

Additionally, the beneficial bacteria in your gut can increase GABA receptors in the brain. GABA is another neurotransmitter linked to mood regulation and is often associated with mood disorders like chronic depression when levels are low.



Weight loss & Your Gut

When the bad bacteria in your gut significantly outnumber the good ones, a condition called gut dysbiosis can occur. This imbalance can disrupt your body's normal metabolism and lead to insulin resistance, which often results in weight gain.

On the flip side, optimising your gut bacteria can have positive effects. Remember the ideal ratio between good and bad bacteria is 85:15.

While it's true that you inherit much of your gut microbiota from your mother during birth, your microbiome continues to develop and change as you grow, especially with the introduction of various foods and supplements. This means your gut health isn't solely determined by your genetics.

Infact, studies have shown that even identical twins can have completely different gut bacteria profiles. For example, one twin might be obese while the other remains healthy, highlighting that genetics aren't the only factor at play.

Genetics are not the only factors at play

It's important to recognise this because many people feel trapped by their genetic predispositions, especially regarding weight. They might believe they're destined to be overweight or obese and feel helpless to change.

However, this isn't true. While genetics do play a role, they're not the whole story. Your environment, lifestyle, daily choices, and decisions have a profound impact on your health.



Immunity & Your Gut

About 70% of your immune system is located in your gut.

Which makes sense because the gut is where your body comes into contact with many pathogens, viruses, and bacteria from the food and drink you consume. Having a strong immune presence in the gut allows your body to fight off these invaders more effectively.

The gut-associated lymphoid tissue (GALT) makes up a large part of your immune system, with around 80% of your immune cells residing there.

For your immune system to work optimally, maintaining a healthy balance of good and bad bacteria in your gut is crucial, ideally an 85:15 ratio as previously discussed.

Factors that Disrupt

However, as we have been learning this balance can be disrupted by factors like poor diet, lack of sleep, stress, alcohol, smoking, antibiotics, and junk food. When this happens, you might start to experience symptoms such as headaches, mood swings, weight gain, acne, gas, bloating, and stomach pain.

Over time, if these symptoms are ignored, they can develop into more serious health issues like IBS, Crohn's disease, autism, or even cancer. These symptoms are your body's way of signaling that something is wrong, so it's important to address them early on.

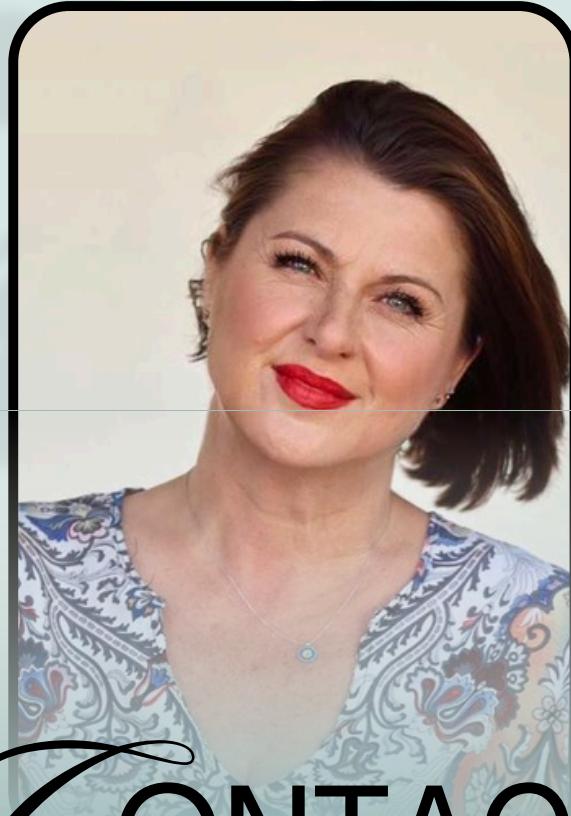
Key Takeaways

By implementing the tips I've shared, you're taking important steps toward improving your gut health. These changes can have a powerful impact on your overall well-being, helping you feel better both physically and mentally. Keep up the good work, and you'll be well on your way to a healthier, happier you!



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CONTACT

ME 

 +27 72 435 3242

 tanja@holistic-practice.com

 www.holistic-practice.com

 Online
4 Rheezeit Crecent,
Onrusrivier 7201