

All About the Gut Microbiome

The gut microbiome, located inside the intestines, is home to a diverse population of microorganisms. This ecosystem includes bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites.

We are first introduced to bacteria that will grow in our guts through vagina birth and/or breastfeeding. As we age, our diet and environment continue to introduce new bacteria into our gut microbiome. These exposures can either help or harm our gut health.



Imagine your body as a house. You as the homeowner, are responsible for maintaining the living space to make sure everything runs smoothly. Your house also has a network of pipes and wires that keep the lights on and the water running behind the scenes. Your body's internal ecosystem, the gut microbiome, is the system behind the scenes that supports your digestion, immune system, metabolism, and even your mental health and mood!

Let us take a closer look at the systems the gut microbiome directly impacts:

Digestive System: Bacteria in our gut helps our digestive system break down micronutrients, complex carbohydrates, and dietary fibre. This process helps us fully digest our food and absorb essential nutrients.

Immune System: Did you know that your gut is the largest immune system organ, housing 80% of our body's immune cells? These cells help remove germs that pass through our system every day.

Nervous System: The gut microbiome affects our nervous system through the gut-brain axis. Ever had a “gut feeling”? If so, you have experienced how the network of nerves, neurons, and neurotransmitters between your brain and gut communicate. The health of our gut microbiome impacts their ability to communicate. Additionally, bacteria in our gut helps to produce the feel-good hormones (like serotonin) that can affect our mood and mental health.

An unhealthy or unbalanced gut microbiome could mean a loss of healthy bacteria, an overgrowth of bad bacteria, or a loss of bacteria diversity. Signs that you may have an unbalanced microbiome include:

- Gas and gas pain.
- Bloating stomach.
- Poor digestion.
- Lower abdominal pain.
- Diarrhea or constipation

Learn more about improving your gut microbiome in next week's article!

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