



# THE HYPE ABOUT GUT HEALTH

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It's pretty incredible that a host of bacteria living inside of our gut can play such an integral and powerful role in keeping us healthy. In fact, the gut is often referred to as our body's "second brain," and it is regularly communicating with the brain in our head via hundreds of millions of nerve cells throughout our gastrointestinal tract. Not only is the gut essential for digesting the food we eat and converting it into energy and nutrients for our bodies to use, but it is also a key factor in improving and maintaining our immunity as well, 70% of which is actually housed inside of our gut!

The food we eat directly impacts the composition and health of our gut bacteria; and this, in turn, effects how healthy we are and feel, and how well our body functions. If you are among the majority of the population, you've probably suffered from conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), leaky gut, upset stomach, bloating, or even lethargy and fatigue. Many of these symptoms and issues can indicate unhealthy or imbalanced gut bacteria.

## So how can you tell if your gut health is – or is not – in working order? Consider these points:

- **Consistent bowel movements.** Whether you have a bowel movement three times a week, or three times a day, know what your normal is and make note of any shifts in this pattern. Increases or decreases in your frequency can indicate constipation or diarrhea, both of which can be a result of an imbalanced gut.

- **Look at your diet.** Quite simply, the quality of what we put into our bodies is directly correlated to how well our bodies will function. If we fill ourselves full of processed, fried or otherwise empty-calorie foods, we are putting extreme stress onto our bodies and creating internal inflammation. When our bodies are inflamed, our immune system will become preoccupied with working over-time to try to reverse this inflammation, which then makes our bodies more susceptible to other infections and illness.



- **Pay attention to how you feel after you eat.** After you eat, do you regularly find yourself bloated or having abdominal pain? Do you feel especially tired or lethargic? Do you find yourself moody, anxious or depressed? Digestive issues, food sensitivities, and emotional waves could be symptoms related to an unhealthy or improperly functioning gut.

The good news is this: our guts are easily influenced by the food we eat. This is incredibly encouraging for those of us seeking to improve the state of our gut.

## Here are some easy changes you can make to your daily routine to support your gut:

- Focus on increasing fruits, vegetables and whole grains into your diet
- Reducing processed or refined foods as often as possible
- Stick to water and other sugar-free beverages
- Incorporate probiotic-rich foods such as sugar-free yogurts, sauerkraut, kefir, miso soup or kombucha. Probiotics is otherwise known as the live bacteria that accumulate in our gut.
- Add foods high in prebiotics as well including onions, garlic, apples, beans or flax. Prebiotics are a dietary fiber that help fertilize the good bacteria in our gut.
- Get plenty of sleep

