

A close-up photograph of a person's midsection. The person is wearing a grey t-shirt and blue jeans. Their right hand is resting on their stomach, with fingers slightly spread. The lighting is soft, and the overall tone is muted. The text 'GUT HEALTH' is overlaid in the center in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

GUT HEALTH

Gut Health

1. Take probiotics and eat fermented foods

Kimchi may help improve gut health.

To boost the beneficial bacteria, or probiotics, in the gut, some people choose to take probiotic supplements.

These are available in health food stores, drug stores, and online.

Taking probiotics can support a healthy gut microbiome, and that it may prevent gut inflammation and other intestinal problems.

Fermented foods are a natural source of probiotics.

Consuming the following foods regularly may improve gut health:

- fermented vegetables
- kefir
- kimchi
- kombucha
- miso
- sauerkraut
- tempeh

2. Eat prebiotic fiber

Probiotics feed on nondigestible carbohydrates called prebiotics. This process encourages beneficial bacteria to multiply in the gut.

Prebiotics may help probiotics become more tolerant to certain environmental conditions, including pH and temperature changes.

People who want to enhance their gut health may wish to include more of the following prebiotic-rich foods in their diet:

- asparagus
- bananas
- chicory
- garlic
- Jerusalem artichoke
- onions
- whole grains

3. Continue to eat less sugar and sweeteners

Eating a lot of sugar or artificial sweeteners may cause gut dysbiosis, which is an imbalance of gut microbes.

The standard Western diet, which is high in sugar and fat, negatively affects the gut microbiome. In turn, this can influence the brain and behavior.

Artificial sweetener aspartame increases the number of some bacterial strains that are linked with metabolic disease.

Metabolic disease refers to a group of conditions that increase the risk of diabetes and heart disease.

Artificial sweeteners can negatively impact blood glucose levels due to their effects on gut flora. This means that artificial sweeteners may increase blood sugar despite not actually being a sugar.

4. Reduce stress

Sleep deprivation can negatively affect gut health.

Managing stress is important for many aspects of health, including gut health.

Psychological stressors can disrupt the microorganisms in the intestines, even if the stress is only short-lived.

In humans, a variety of stressors can negatively affect gut health, including:

psychological stress

environmental stress, such as extreme heat, cold, or noise

sleep deprivation

disruption of the circadian rhythm

Some stress management techniques include meditation, deep breathing exercises, and progressive muscle relaxation.

Exercising regularly, sleeping well, and eating a healthful diet can also reduce stress levels.

5. Avoid taking antibiotics unnecessarily

Although it is often necessary to take antibiotics to combat bacterial infections, overuse is a significant public health concern that can lead to antibiotic resistance.

Antibiotics are also damaging to the gut microbiota and immunity, with some research^{Trusted Source} reporting that even 6 months after their use, the gut still lacks several species of beneficial bacteria.

6. Exercise regularly

Regularly exercising contributes to good heart health and weight loss or weight maintenance. Research [Trusted Source](#) has also suggested that it may also improve gut health, which may, in turn, help control obesity.

Working out may increase species diversity. Athletes have a larger variety of gut flora than nonathletes.

However, the athletes also ate a different diet to the control group, which could account for the differences in their microbiomes.

7. Get enough sleep

Getting enough good-quality sleep can improve mood, cognition, and gut health.

A 2014 animal study [Trusted Source](#) indicated that irregular sleep habits and disturbed sleep can have negative outcomes for the gut flora, which may increase the risk of inflammatory conditions.

Establish healthful sleep habits by going to bed and getting up at the same time each day. Adults should get at least 7 hours [Trusted Source](#) of sleep per night.

8. Use different cleaning products

Just as antibiotics can disrupt the gut microbiota, so too can disinfectant cleaning products, according to the results of one study. The 2018 research analyzed the gut flora of over 700 infants ages 3–4 months.

The researchers found that those who lived in homes where people used disinfectant cleaning products at least weekly were twice as likely to have higher levels of Lachnospiraceae gut microbes, a type associated with type 2 diabetes and obesity.

At age 3, these infants had a higher body mass index (BMI) than children without exposure to such high levels of disinfectants.

9. Avoid smoking

Smoking affects gut health as well as the health of the heart and lungs. It also greatly increases the risk of cancer.

A 2018 review of research published over a 16-year period found that smoking alters the intestinal flora by increasing potentially harmful microorganisms and decreasing the levels of beneficial ones.

These effects may increase the risk of intestinal and systemic conditions, such as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

10. Stay well hydrated (but not at meal times)

I recommend people to drink a lot of water but not to consume it at the same time as food. I have found this to be hugely beneficial for reducing bloating and irritation.

I suggest no water for 20mins before or after a meal.

11. Experiment with no gluten.

For some if gluten is a problem it can make a huge difference to remove it, for others it will make little to no difference. So experiment with it.