

# BUILDING A HEALTHY GUT MICROBIOTA

## Why is the digestive system important for health?

The purpose of eating is to provide our body with the nutrients and energy it needs to function optimally.

Throughout our lives around 60 tonnes of food pass through our GI tract, along with an abundance of microorganisms from the environment.

If insufficient nutrition is provided to the body, it can cause the development of diseases like irritable bowel disease, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, certain cancers, and some dementias.



## Microbes use food to...

Regulate appetite

Support immunity

Make vitamins B and K

Prevent some diseases

Support healthy digestion

Prevent invasion from bad bacteria

Regulate levels of sugar and fat in the blood

Make hormones linked to mood, anxiety & stress

Make amino acids - the body's building blocks

## How is food digested?

**1.** Digestion begins in the mouth. We chew food to start breaking it into smaller pieces.

**2.** Acids & churning in the stomach break food down further enabling it to pass to the small intestine.

**3.** The small intestine carries out 90% of the digestion & absorption process. Cells break down food particles into nutrients which can be absorbed

**4.** Unabsorbed fibre & fluid enter the large intestine, fluid is absorbed, fibre is eaten by microbes. Any leftover waste exits through the colon.

One vital component of digestion is the gut microbiota (GM), trillions of different microbes that colonize our digestive tract. The GM is hugely variable between people, even twins, as they are highly reactive to our diet and lifestyles. Having a healthy GM is important not only for digestion but for overall health and the key is diversity. It isn't about having one star microbe; it's about having a strong and diverse team of microbes to carry out all tasks effectively.

## 6 Tips for a healthy gut microbiota

**GET ACTIVE**  
Getting your heart rate up for 30 minutes a day increases GM diversity.

**FOCUS ON SLEEP HEALTH**  
Poor sleep disrupts our GM as it, like us, has a circadian rhythm. This disruption can play a role in obesity & diabetes.

**INCLUDE ALL FOOD GROUPS AT MEALS**

- Vegetables/Fruit
- Protein
- Wholegrains
- Healthy fats

**EAT 30 PLANTS A WEEK**

- Nuts
- Seeds
- Grains
- Vegetables
- Fruits

The more diverse your diet, the more diverse your GM

**EAT PROBIOTICS**

- Yoghurt
- Kefir
- Kimchi
- Kombucha
- Sauerkraut

They all contain live bacteria & yeasts which help restore balance

**INCLUDE PREBIOTICS**

- Apricots, dates & figs
- Artichokes & asparagus
- Almonds & cashews

prebiotics are nondigestible foods which feed microbes. Some foods contain a prebiotic called resistant starch which increases or decreases depending on age & state: green bananas, cooked & cool pasta, rice & potatoes