



Ways to Promote a Healthy Gut

Our gut health plays a critical role in overall wellbeing. It influences immunity, brain function, metabolism, and communicates directly with the brain through the gut–brain axis.

Because of this powerful connection, the gut is often referred to as the “second brain” or “little brain”.¹ The gut and brain are constantly communicating via your vagus nerve, which is the longest cranial nerve and runs all the way from your digestive tract to your brainstem.²

Your gut even has its own nervous system, called your enteric nervous system (ENS), and it is made up of millions of nerve cells.¹ The health of the microbiome in our gut can influence the ENS, which affects both our mood and overall wellbeing. This can impact things like

neurotransmitters and our stress response. Ever notice how you may feel butterflies in your stomach when you are excited, stressed, or nervous? That is highlighting the connection between our brain and our gut.

You may be wondering what factors or lifestyle choices help to support a healthy microbiome. Prioritizing aerobic movement, a diverse diet, and stress reduction can support a healthy microbiome, which in turn supports vagus nerve function and may improve your overall mood. Strive for what is realistic and remember everything in moderation.

Below are a few simple things to keep in mind as you care for your gut health.

This material is to be used for informational purposes only and is not intended to be exhaustive, nor should any of the materials be construed as professional or medical advice.



FOODS TO CONSIDER

- High-fiber, plant-rich options
- Yogurt
- Kimchi
- Sauerkraut
- Pickled foods
- Fermented veggies



ACTIVITIES TO CONSIDER

- Running
- Walking
- Hiking
- Biking
- Sleep hygiene
- Stress management techniques

1. Johns Hopkins Medicine. (2023). The brain-gut connection. <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/the-brain-gut-connection>

2. Cleveland Clinic. (2022, January 11). Vagus nerve: What it is, function, location & conditions. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/body/22279-vagus-nerve>