



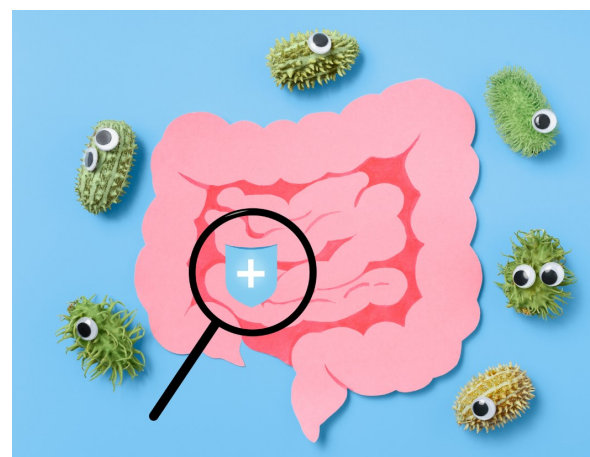
Have you found the term 'gut health' popping up in newspaper articles, on TV or on online? It seems to be everywhere! Sometimes things like this can seem like they may be a bit of a fad, but in this case there is solid academic research into this connection between gut health and mental and physical wellbeing.

During the course of this newsletter we'll explore this link and give you some tips to keep your gut healthy.

With best wishes
Hannah and the Project Food team

What is gut health?

Did you know there are about a hundred trillion microbes living in your gut? That's more cells than in your whole body! These tiny creatures—bacteria, viruses, and fungi—play a big role in keeping you healthy. And the term 'gut health' refers to the balance and function of these microorganisms that live in the digestive tract.



And what about the benefits of looking after your gut health?

There are the more obvious benefit of course...things like reduced bloating, constipation, diarrhoea and wind, but there is also growing evidence to show that many common diseases are thought to be linked to declining gut health, including type 2 diabetes, obesity, depression, anxiety, and irritable bowel syndrome.

How can we look after our gut health?

Advertising, especially on TV and online, can sometimes lead us to believe that we need to eat things like probiotic yoghurt drinks, kombucha and kimchi in order to maintain a healthy gut. Whilst it is true that these things can be helpful, they are also usually expensive and can contain other ingredients, such as sugar or sweeteners, which are not good for you.



Actually, the most important thing that you can do is to eat more fibre, including wholegrains, and increase your intake of a wide variety of fruit and vegetables. Frozen and tinned fruit and veg count too! You'll find a gut friendly recipe enclosed with your newsletter.

What about foods to avoid?

One type of food to avoid is so called 'ultra processed food'. This includes things like many breakfast cereals, shop bought snacks such as crisps, many biscuits and chocolate bars, fizzy drinks, instant soup and noodles, ready meals and fruit flavoured yoghurts.



There is growing evidence to link the high consumption of ultra-processed food in the population with a long list of long-term health conditions. Over 50% of the UK adult diet is made up of ultra-processed food, while it is over 70% in children. Whilst we are certainly not suggesting that you or your family should never eat these types of foods, it is worth looking at ways to cut down. For example, a fruit flavoured yoghurt could be swapped for natural yoghurt served with fruit, and breakfast cereal could be swapped for porridge a few times a week.

Remember, one of the keys to helping changes to your diet to stick it to start small. Instead of saying 'I will never eat a bag of crisps' telling yourself that you start by swapping one bag of crisps for a piece of fruit. You can then build on this as your confidence develops.

Top tips to keep your gut healthy

- Introduce more fibre, including wholegrains, into your diet. An easy way of doing this is swapping white pasta/rice for whole-meal/brown. Or replacing some of the meat in a Bolognese sauce with lentils.
- Eat a rainbow—increase your fruit and veg and try and make your choices of these as colourful as possible. For example, when eating pasta dish with a tomato/Bolognese style sauce serve with a green side salad.
- Try adding some fermented foods to your daily diet. They don't have to be expensive or fancy, plain natural yoghurt is an excellent way to do this.
- Stay hydrated—an easy one here, just drink more water!
- Limit ultra processed foods—see above.

