Gut Health

Gut health. Catchy phrase, isn't it? Of course the first thing it brings to mind is diarrhea, constipation, bloating and gas, right? But gut health is so much more.

It's not just whether your bowels regularly move or whether you have runny stools. It's whether you have the right balance of good bacteria to bad bacteria and yeast that determines whether many functions of the gut work properly including assimilation of nutrients.

A sick gut is overrun with "bad" bacteria and yeast. We label bacteria as good when the bacteria benefit us. Good bacteria help us further digest our food, they produce serotonin (a necessary neurotransmitter), and they create byproducts through their metabolic processes that are either beneficial to us or benign. They also play a very important role in keeping both bad bacteria and yeast in check.

Bad bacteria cause inflammation of the tissues in the gut and they release harmful toxins through their metabolic processes. Yeast does the same. In addition, it burrows holes through the protective inner lining of the gut allowing food particles and proteins to pass into the bloodstream. We refer to this process as leaky gut syndrome. This corruption of the normal digestive process sets the immune system into overdrive. Many now believe that leaky gut syndrome may very well be the common denominator and precursor for many kinds of autoimmune disease.

Antibiotic use and gut health

Antibiotics kill bacteria. That's what they are made to do. The problem is, they usually kill a wide variety of bacteria, both good and bad. After using an antibiotic, you not only need to increase or repopulate your good bacteria, the yeast

in your system has had a chance to multiply since the good bacteria that normally keeps it in check has died off. You need to kill the yeast and replenish the good bacteria.

How to increase the good bacteria in the gut

So a healthy balance of good bacteria in the gut is essential to health, especially since our immune system requires good gut health. How do we go about ensuring we have an abundance of good bacteria?

First of all, build them a home and they will come. Good bacteria thrive in a fiber-rich environment. It makes them happy – so gloriously happy they multiply like crazy. The foods that promote this environment are prebiotic foods- raw, fresh, organic, fiber filled vegetables and fruits. The best thing we can do to create an environment that feeds, houses, and promotes good bacteria is to eat a large salad every day filled with dark leafy greens and 10-15 types of vegetables.

Probiotic foods (fermented milk products and vegetables) can also help to increase the amount of good bacteria in the gut, but their significance is often highly overrated. First of all, sugar filled kefir and yogurt products do not promote health. And most of the time, the probiotic bacteria do not survive the stomach acid. But there are supplements made to get past the stomach acid and eating sugar-free probiotic foods on a regular basis will help to some extent. Just remember, the primary method to increase good bacteria is through raw vegetables.

Recommended Supplements:

- Floramind-Prime by Thorne
- Shillington’s Intestinal Cleanse
- Formula SF722

- MicroDefense – Pure Encapsulations

Further Reading:

- *The Fascinating Bacteria in our Gut, and How it Affects Our Whole Lives*
- *How to Kill Candida and Balance Your Inner Ecosystem*
- *After taking antibiotics, this is what you need to do to restore healthy intestinal flora*
- *Fermented Foods Optimize Your Health*