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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Your Gut Health

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WHAT IS GUT HEALTH?

The gut contains trillions of microorganisms, including beneficial and harmful varieties. Collectively, these make up what is known as our “gut microbiome.” Maintaining a healthy balance of microorganisms within the microbiome is crucial. Factors like diet, exercise, medications and even genetics can affect its composition and diversity, impacting various aspects of your health for better or worse.

Your gut health impacts your immune system, your mental health and your overall well-being.

When you have a healthy gut, your gastrointestinal tract has a good balance of gut bacteria and is able to properly digest and absorb nutrients. But when there is an imbalance in your gut bacteria, it may trigger unwanted gastrointestinal symptoms, like diarrhea, as well as mental health issues.

On page 2, continue reading more about gut health and how it impacts our daily lives.

THE LINK BETWEEN GUT HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

There's a reason that your gut is called your "second brain." There is a lot of crosstalk between your gut and your brain through the nerve that connects them. This communication between the gut and brain is known as the **gut-brain axis**. Gut bacteria has the power to stimulate the nervous system, sending messages to your brain through the vagus nerve. Plus, microorganisms in the gut release neurotransmitters like serotonin, which can affect your mood.

An imbalance in gut bacteria can result in psychological symptoms, like brain fog and irritability. Organisms that like to feed off sugar can communicate to your brain to eat more sugar. And sometimes this communication can override logic.

SIGNS OF POOR GUT HEALTH

When your body doesn't have enough good bacteria, bad bacteria can thrive. The following can be signs of a gut bacteria imbalance:

- Autoimmune problems, such as thyroid issues, rheumatoid arthritis and type 1 diabetes
- Digestive issues, such as irritable bowel syndrome, constipation, diarrhea, heartburn or bloating
- Sleep issues
- Skin rashes and allergies
- Sugar cravings
- Unexplained fatigue or sluggishness
- Unexplained mood disorders, such as depression or anxiety
- Unexplained weight gain or weight loss

So, when should you see a doctor about your gut health? If you have any of the poor gut health symptoms mentioned above, talk to your doctor. Your annual physical is a good time to check in with your provider about your gut health and bowel habits to ensure everything is working correctly.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR GUT HEALTH

Diet has a significant impact on gut health.

Eating a large amount of sugar is linked to an overgrowth of bad bacteria in your gut. Processed foods, as well as alcohol, can also negatively impact gut health.

Prebiotic and probiotic foods like whole grains, onions, garlic, fermented foods, miso and yogurt feed the good bacteria in your gut. A diet rich with fiber and prebiotics ensures that the good bacteria grows.

If you don't want to completely cut out things like sugar, alcohol or artificial sweeteners, moderation is important.

Also remember to stay hydrated, and avoid taking unnecessary antibiotics, which can reduce both good and bad bacteria in the body.





RECIPE OF THE MONTH

CHILLED ASPARAGUS SOUP

TOTAL TIME: 30 MINUTES

Ingredients:

Did you know? Asparagus is a good source of dietary fiber, which in turn helps your stomach and intestines continue to work normally. Dietary fiber fuels good bacteria, which help your body digest food and absorb important nutrients. Eating enough fiber also helps prevent problems like hemorrhoids, irritable bowel syndrome, or other painful digestive problems. Our recipe for Chilled Asparagus Soup is a great way to add more dietary fiber to your daily routine, and a refreshing way to start your summer!

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium white onion, thinly sliced
- 1–1/2 pounds asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt plus more for serving
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper plus more for serving
- 2 cups vegetable stock
- 4 ounces fresh baby spinach
- Minced chives and fresh parsley for serving

Directions:

1. Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Sauté the onions until they are completely soft and translucent, about 8-10 minutes. Add the asparagus, salt and pepper and continue cooking until the stalks turn bright green, about 4-5 minutes. (Reserve about 1/4 cup asparagus to garnish the soup.)
2. Increase the heat and add the stock. Once the stock is boiling, reduce the heat and simmer until the asparagus is tender, about 8-10 minutes. Then add the spinach stirring until it has wilted, about 2 minutes. Allow the soup to slightly cool.
3. In batches, transfer the soup to a blender to puree. Strain the soup in a fine mesh sieve. Cool to room temperature and then chill in the refrigerator before serving.
4. Top each bowl with the reserved asparagus, salt, pepper, chives and parsley.