



healthy gut

The gastrointestinal system plays a major role in a happy, healthy lifestyle. It's the source of all our life-giving nutrients, our energy, our vitality. A well-balanced gut supports a healthy immune system. In fact, the gastrointestinal tract plays such an important role it is often referred to as the "second brain". About 95% of serotonin, the neurotransmitter responsible for mood stabilization, is found in the gutl. A healthy gut means a happy you!

The System

- MOUTH
- ESOPHAGUS
- STOMACH
- SMALL INTESTINE
- LARGE INTESTINE
- RECTUM
- SALIVARY GLANDS
- PANCREAS
- LIVER
- GALL BLADDER



how it works

The gastrointestinal tract, comprised of the stomach and intestines, is responsible for digestion of food, absorption of nutrients and removal of waste from our bodies. The digestive system begins at the mouth where the first stages of food breakdown occur. Once food is chewed and swallowed it makes it way down the esophagus to the stomach for further breakdown.

From there it travels through the small intestine, where the majority of nutrient absorption occurs.

Nutrients are then passed through blood vessels into the bloodstream for distribution to the tissues of the body. Undigested food and waste continue through the large intestine for further absorption of nutrients and water. The remaining waste is excreted out the rectum, where the pelvic floor muscles relax to allow it to exit.

The other organs that assist digestion in our bodies are the salivary glands, pancreas, liver, and gall bladder.

gut symptoms

The digestive system is a complex one, and has a major influence on the rest of the body. But many of us may not realize when our system isn't working as well as it should. Common GI symptoms include:

- CONSTIPATION
- DIARRHEA
- BLOATING
- ABDOMINAL CRAMPS
- BELCHING OR FLATULENCE
- NAUSEA
- ACID REFLUX OR HEARTBURN



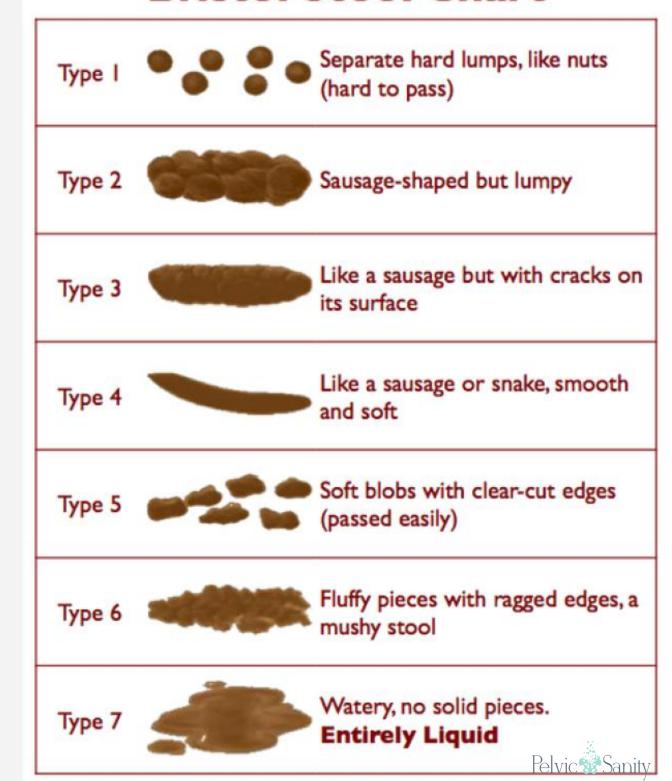
clues to bourel health

Often the first sign of GI issues can be found in the stool. The shape, consistency, texture, color, and time tell us a lot about how our GI system is working.

The Bristol Stool Chart is a great reference. Ideally, we would have Type 3 and Type 4 stool. The optimal bowel movement should be painless, take about a minute, not require straining, and leave you feeling completely emptied.

Types 1 and 2 suggest constipation, while Types 5, 6 and 7 imply varying levels of diarrhea.

Bristol Stool Chart





alter your diet Get more fiber. Fiber helps food pass through the intestines, keeping us regular and preventing hard, painful stool. It's found in fruits., vegetables, and whole grains. There are two main types - soluble and insoluble - that have different benefits for the digestive system.

- Soluble fiber absorbs water within the digestive tract, forming a gel-like substance that softens stool for easier passage. It supports the good bacteria found within the gut, and slows the absorption of cholesterol and sugar into the bloodstream. Soluble fiber is found in avocados, beans, and oats.
- Insoluble fiber doesn't absorb water and isn't broken down by the GI system. It adds bulk to our waste, promoting more regular bowel movements. Vegetables, fruits, and whole grains are high in insoluble fiber.

Identify and eliminate food allergies. Many of us may be allergic to specific foods or drinks, even if we are unaware of it. If you're having GI issues, a doctor can test you for various food intolerances.

Reduce processed foods, sugar, and meat. Alcohol and caffeine can also have a negative impact on bowel health. If you notice that curtailing these improves your symptoms, they may be an underlying culprit.

pesticides

A shocking amount of our food contains pesticides - according to one report, 70% of all produce contained significant levels of pesticides. On average, each American has traces of 29 different pesticides in our body at any one time.

While we don't know exactly whether - or how much - these pesticides affect us, we do know that occupations exposed to high pesticide concentrations have experienced significant health concerns related to pesticides.

The Environmental Working Group posts lists of produce with the highest and lowest amounts of pesticide residue every year.

The "Dirty Dozen", or produce with highest amounts of pesticide for 2018, include strawberries, spinach, potatoes and apples. To reduce exposure, it is best to invest in organic options for these.

The "Clean Fifteen", items with the least pesticide residue, include foods like avocados, asparagus, papaya and cauliflower. Conventional produce is acceptable for this list.





uater intake Drinking enough water is one of the most important things you can do for your gut health. It not only helps keep everything moving, but fluid also keeps the intestines healthy and flexible as well.

A good rule of thumb for water intake is that you should drink half your body weight daily (in ounces). So a 150-lb person should be drinking at least 75 ounces daily. You can also just let your thirst be your guide!



Several supplements may be able to improve overall gut health.



Prebiotics promote the growth of healthy bacteria in the gut. They can be taken as supplements, or found in foods like leeks, asparagus, onions, and garlic.

Probiotics actually contain the healthy bacteria essential to gut health. Foods like yogurt, kombucha, soybeans, and any pickled foods contain probiotics. You can also take these as a supplement - we recommend Thorne's FloraMend Prime Probiotic.

Fiber is important to regular bowel movements, and can be taken as a supplement if you're not getting enough fiber from your diet. Glucomannan is a common type of fiber used as a dietary supplement.

Omega-3 fish oils can reduce systemic inflammation.

Magnesium is a mineral that can have a laxative effect if you are dealing with constipation.

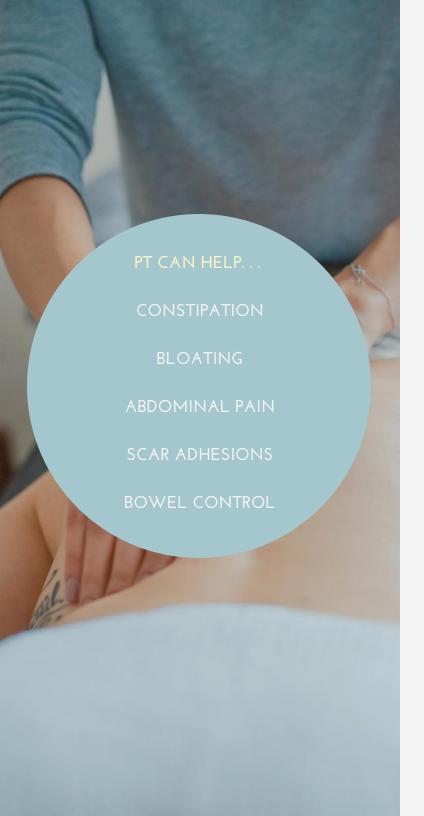
Not enough high quality evidence is present to fully support use of supplements for treatment of any symptoms or conditions, but preliminary research suggests that they may help to decrease GI issues. Before taking any supplements, always consult your physician Links may be affiliate links, where the price you pay doesn't change but we receive small commission from your purchase.

Pelvic Sanity

improve gut health with....

- Exercise Get moving! Being active keeps your digestive tract moving as well. It doesn't need to be a lot take a walk after meals to reduce bloating spark your digestion.
- Sleep In addition to all the other important aspects of sleep improving mood, lowering stress and blood pressure, boosting memory and cognitive function - sleep also plays an important role int he digestive system. Better sleep may allow the body the downtime it needs to process food and repair cells, and improved sleep quality has even been associated with lower weight!
- Stress Management Stress actively interferes with the digestive system. When we're stressed, the body believes we're in a state of emergency and prioritizes short-term survival over long-term projects (like digesting food). Stress is linked to ulcers and heartburn, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and constipation Chronic stress can even imbalance the beneficial gut flora, and results in higher levels of inflammation that can also cause digestive issues. Dealing with this stress can have a huge impact on gut health!





physical therapy

Physical therapy can be an important tool for managing digestive health. The pelvic floor muscles are responsible for keeping us continent. They're turned on all day, and have to relax in order to allow us to defecate.

Often, these pelvic floor muscles can be overly tight and difficult to relax. This can cause constipation, the feeling of an incomplete empty, or make going to the bathroom difficult or painful. Pelvic floor physical therapy can restore these muscles to their normal function, allowing them to relax so a complete void can take place.

Pelvic PT can also address any abdominal issues that may be restricting the GI tract. Scar tissue adhesion can be a common culprit, contributing to constipation, abdominal pain, and bloating. Fascial tension can also cause discomfort and contribute to a bloated feeling, which can be eased with physical therapy.

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common dietary restrictions

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diary-free

Many people struggle to fully digest the sugar (lactose) in dairy products, leading to GI symptoms like diarrhea, gas, and bloating after consuming dairy. Diary can also cause additional inflammation within the body, so anti-inflammatory diets often restrict diary intake.

gluten-free

Gluten is a protein in wheat, found in almost all processed foods. While there is contradictory research on non-Celiac gluten sensitivity, going gluten-free results in a healthier diet as processed foods are eliminated. Patients can see significant benefits in GI health and pain reduction with a gluten-free approach.

elimination diet

One of the most powerful tools for discovering the cause of GI (and other!) symptoms, an elimination diet removes common irritants. These can include gluten, diary, sugar, alcohol, caffeine, soy, or other possible irritants. You observe how your symptoms change without these possible irritants. Then, you begin slowly adding these items back into your diet one at a time - it quickly becomes apparent if there is a food trigger for your symptoms!



the big takeauays

There is a lot you can do to improve your gastrointestinal health. Feeling lethargic bloated or gassy are some indicators your system is off. You now have the tools to recognize an unhealthy gut and some ways to correct it.

Eat right, stay active, get enough sleep and manage stress to keep that digestive tract moving smoothly!



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