



let's gut through this together

the gut stuff

For so many reasons at this time it's important to focus on what we're in control of and the tools we have in our own personal armoury to make the best of what we have. What better time to start learning about, and caring, for the dennis to our menace, our gut. Considering 70% of our immune system is housed within it, it's more timely than ever.

Although we're currently having to see less people than usual, we've actually got a little family inside us, the microscopic bugs, (mostly bacteria), that live within

us - that's, your gut microbiota - and they control so much more than we ever thought possible.

These guys are actually pretty easily pleased and give us back so much in return, the same goes for other aspects of wellbeing, if we give things like sleep, routine, stress and diet a little bit TLC they'll pay it back ten fold.

And *spoiler alert* it's not inaccessible or expensive and the whole family will thank you for it (well maybe not the sauerkraut but you'll get there ha!!).

gut tips

routine

Whether you live on your own, with your family or housemates, working from home needs routine to help you get the most out of your day and your gut will thank you for it too. Routine doesn't just happen, it needs a bit of planning.

Now we aren't saying you have to stick to one rigidly, but having some sort of plan of action for your week can really help. Set aside half an hour at the weekend to work out what Monday - Friday looks for you, we like to think of it like this:

move – dance, exercise, walk, squat – gut moving

mind – whether its work, reading, studying of listening to a podcast – stimulate your brain

gut – think about the foods you are putting in and make time to eat.

home – organise, tidy, clean or just create a calm space – heart is where the home is

together (friends, family, colleagues) – get online, connect, write a letter

you – take time to de-stress and do something for you

chew, chew and chew again

Something that doesn't cost a thing and can be done anywhere! When working from home or just being at home in general, it can become really easy to graze your way through the day without a thought. Set aside time for breakfast and lunch where you sit down without your phone/laptop/TV and focus on your food. If you can, use this time to sit down with others in your home too.

Digestion starts before we even put the food in our mouths and the digestion that occurs in your mouth is two-fold. First, the action of chewing physically breaks down your food into small pieces and second, enzymes in your saliva help break down your food even further. If you don't chew thoroughly, it can make it harder for your gut. Try to chew each mouthful 20-30 times before swallowing, put your cutlery down before mouthfuls and make sure you are sitting down.

fibre!

Fibre is the unsung hero of nutrition and 9/10 of us aren't getting enough of it, and it's not all about prune juice and cereals. We're supposed to be getting around 30g per day, to put this into context one apple is 4g - so it's a high number to hit, but luckily nature has packaged both soluble and insoluble fibres into lots of the same plant-based foods. Variety is key, as different foods have different benefits and feed different bacteria!

It's important because it bulks out and softens your stool by retaining water, which supports gut transit time and prevents constipation. Certain types of fibre can be fermented by beneficial gut bacteria (food for the bacteria basically!), which produce short-chain fatty acids, which are a source of energy and it also slows down the breakdown of sugars found in carbohydrates, which helps stabilise your energy levels. Fibre also promotes an environment favourable to beneficial gut bacteria (and we know we need to keep them happy) and more seriously, a diet high in fibre can reduce the risk of developing high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, and bowel cancer.

So it has so many benefits beyond helping you "go"!

Make the most of what you have at home already and think about variety (more on that next):

tinned or dried lentils, beans and chickpeas – are an easy one to add into salads and soups and are useful to help bulk out meals, making your fresh food go even further

wholegrains: whole grain pasta, noodles, oats, flour, brown rice, whole grain pasta – another great staple that has a long shelf life and can help provide important nutrients, fibre and make meals go further.

vegetables and fruit – aim for as much variety as you can and where possible, keep the skins on for extra fibre. Use your freezer wisely – having a stash of already frozen veg (mixed veg, spinach, green beans) and fruit (berries, stewed apples, sliced banana without the skin).



variety

Aside from the scientific reasons, circumstances mean that we may have to rethink how we all tend to reach for the same fruit and veg in the supermarket as we know what to do with them, but at the minute there might not be everything we usually get and we have to branch out. It's also a good excuse to get the kids to try different things and introduce new foods or even grow their own (lead by example!).

You have trillions of bacteria (over a thousand different species!) in your gut and they all thrive on different foods, so variety really is key to making sure you keep them all happy. The recommendation is now 30 different types of plant based fruit and veg a week. (this includes nuts and seeds) - good tips are nut and seed mixes and stir fries where you can throw in leftovers and things to use up. If you don't know what to do with something or you're at the last bits of all the veg! Olive oil (also high in polyphenols which your gut bacteria love) salt, and the oven are your friend for lots of roasted veg. Rade your cupboards and see what you can use, including herbs and spices (these all count). Pimp your porridge and spice up your salads.

Switching your mindset to ADDING things and not restriction is especially important at this time!

move

Your gut bugs like you moving and studies have shown that exercise increases the populations of beneficial bacteria in your gastrointestinal tract by up to 40%! Movement is so much more than a hardcore exercise session. Now more than ever, you are going to need to be creative with ways you get movement into your day, here are some of the things we do:

stand up - If you've got a call / online meeting or chatting with your mates, make everyone stand up (prop your phone up or set your laptop on a pile of books), invest in some wireless headphones and walk around when you are speaking.

get online - with SO MANY different free online classes at the moment there's no excuse not to jump on board, plus you don't have the excuse of the gym being closed or too far away.

dance - not only is it a great way to move, but will help boost those feel good endorphins. Switch on your favourite tunes and get moving - house mates, family and pets!

prebiotics and probiotics

You may have started to hear about these and may even be having a lot of them already without knowing it? It can be a bit confusing with the names being pretty similar but they are actually very different things. You need a good mix of both to keep your gut happy and now is a great time to learn about them and begin to introduce them!

the sciency bit: A probiotic is a "live microorganism that, when eaten/drunk in adequate amounts, confer a health benefit on the host" (you!). Probiotics can be in food form or in supplement form but not all probiotics are created equal - different strains have different effects, and some might have no effect at all, it all depends on the individual. Science is still learning exactly how different strains work so watch this space.

foods containing probiotics: live yogurt, kimchi, sauerkraut, kefir, miso and kombucha. Try getting a mix of different types across the course of your week (we like to experiment and make our own sauerkraut or any fermented hard veg as its cheap and super easy).

prebiotics are a specific type of fibre and are the food for the good bacteria. Great sources of prebiotic food include: onion, garlic, leeks, chicory, bananas (the unripened green ones that nobody wants), asparagus, artichokes, olives, plums, apples, and in grains like bran, and in nuts like almonds.

de-stress

Uncertain times can make us all feel a bit anxious, but it's worth knowing that stress, anxiety and depression can have a direct affect on your microbiome and how well your gut works and vice versa - so some of you might be noticing some more gut problems than usual! All this added anxiety can mean our bodies are regularly in "fight or flight mode", a really simple thing we can do is taking 3 deep breaths before we eat, which can switch your body into "rest and digest" mode to tell your body it's time to eat.

Taking time out for you is a great way to de-stress, which doesn't have to mean meditation and mindfulness, it could be sitting in the garden with a good book, or joining your kids colouring in, or facetimeing friends to take your mind off things (we love the house party app).



If you've got the head space for some learnin' here are our favourite facts



around 70%

of your immune system is found in your gut

Your gut microbiota produces vitamins and fuel for your gut to work

Keeping active supports greater diversity of bacteria in your gut - bacteria diversity equates to better health

98%

of bacteria are good

Your gut microbiota is made up of lots of different species, some that work at night and some that work in the day and help keep your body clock in check

around 90%

of your serotonin (your happy hormone) is produced in your gut