Understanding Your MicroBiome

What is your microbiome?
Trillions of microscopic organisms—or microbes—call your body home. Crazy, right? What’s even more, about 95 percent of those microbes live in your gut. This is where the name “gut microbiome” (or “microbiome” for short) comes from. It refers to the place in your gut where all of these ever-so-necessary microbes (bacteria, viruses, and fungi, etc.) reside.

Why is your microbiome important?
Scientists are actively studying the relationship between our gut microbiome and our health. Recent studies suggest that these tiny microbes are very helpful—essential even—to our health and happiness.

Because 70 percent of your immune cells originate in your gut, you could say your gut microbiome plays an especially important role in overall wellness. The bacteria in your gut microbiome educates and trains your immune system, and produce essential vitamins like B12, folate, and vitamin K. Hello, health!

Even your mood can be influenced by your gut microbiome. Ninety percent of your neurotransmitters including GABA, Dopamine, and serotonin are produced in the gut. A healthy microbe is essential to your feelings of happiness.

Gut microbes can also help keep you slim. Good gut microbes, like Akkermansia, play a critical role in metabolism, producing chemicals that help influence how much you eat, what you crave and how much fat you store. Gut microbes also vital for digestion, and help us break down nutrients to fuel our bodies. And gut microbes produce essential vitamins like B12, folate, and vitamin K.

What affects gut health?
While gut microbiota usually remains fairly stable, there are some external forces that can alter the microbes in your digestive tract.

Radically changing your diet can alter your gut bacteria rather quickly. Probiotic rich foods—like yogurt, apple cider vinegar, miso, and sauerkraut—can influence the microbiota in your intestinal tract, helping to provide the good bacteria needed for a healthy gut.

On the contrary, the foods we eat can produce negative results in our gut health as well. Processed foods, sugar, gluten, and alcohol can interfere with a healthy microbial balance and can compromise intestinal health. Eliminating, or at least limiting, these foods and beverages helps to promote a healthy microbiome.

Your microbiome is unique.
Each of our microorganisms, especially the gut microbiota, is as unique as our fingerprints (or snowflakes!). Everything we do—what we eat, the air we breathe, substances we put on our body, the antibiotics and supplements we take—affects our microbiome in a unique way. It’s up to us to create the healthiest microbiome for ourselves.

Researchers are just now learning just how important the human microbiome is. The microscopic organisms that exist on and throughout our bodies literally number in the trillions and can affect our health and well-being. It’s important to understand exactly what the human microbiome consists of, how what we eat can substantially alter it, and the many ways it affects our emotional and physical health.
References
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