How Your MicroBiome Affects Your Mood


What’s your current mood?

Moods can fluctuate multiple times during the course of the day—sometimes even just the span of a few hours! But what exactly is a “mood?” Is it a fleeting emotion or is it a defining element of our own unique personality?

In psychology, mood refers to a broad emotional state (as opposed to a single emotion). Because the brain houses the limbic system (which plays a key role in our reactions to emotions), it’s common to think that the brain is the sole factor in determining our mood. But, new research says otherwise.

As scientists begin to unearth the hidden world of the microbiome, it’s becoming increasing clear that our moods are also linked to our gut health.

Once we learn and understand this, we can use our stomach and its microbiome to help improve our mood.

First things first: what is the microbiome?

The human gut contains anywhere from 10-100 trillion microorganisms. The term “microbiome” refers to the genes of all of these microorganisms. The microbiome is a living entity; these tiny organisms live in communities and adapt to their ever-changing surroundings.

While some microbes dwell in various parts of our bodies (such as on the skin), the vast majority—95 percent of them in fact—dwell in the gut. As scientists continue to study the human microbiome, they’re focusing specifically on the link between the brain and the gut.

How does the microbiome affect mood?

Microbes secrete neurotransmitters like GABA, dopamine, and serotonin.

How does this boost your mood?

Serotonin, which is a natural mood-booster, is produced in the gut. In fact, the majority (90 percent) of the body’s serotonin is produced in the gut. Without a healthy microbiome to secrete serotonin, it makes sense that your mood may dip when the microbiome is compromised.

Ways to boost your gut health

Seeing as your mood and physical health are affected by the gut, it’s a smart decision to strengthen the gut as much as possible.

Ask your doctor if antibiotics are really necessary. While antibiotics are proven life-savers, they do also diminish the quantity of microbes in the gut. Remember antibiotics will do nothing to ease the symptoms of a virus, so be prudent when opting to take a course of antibiotics.

Eat foods with live cultures such as yogurt and kefir. Look for labels that specifically list strains of bacteria as ingredients.

Take probiotics daily. Probiotics replenish the body’s store of good bacteria; it’s especially important to stay consistent with probiotic intake after a round of antibiotics. Probiotics also promote a healthy immune system and digestive health. More good microbes mean a healthier gut, which means a happier you

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