The Gut Brain Connection

How the Gut–Brain Connection Can Help

For every one human cell in the body, scientists estimate there are 1.3 bacterial cells.¹ If you do the math, that means there are...well, A LOT of bacteria in our bodies. As icky as that may sound, don’t freak out because it’s actually super cool.

These bacterial cells are a normal and necessary part of the functioning human body—and soon you’re going to be trying to figure out how to get more!

What is the gut-brain connection?

Also known as the “gut-brain axis” in science lingo. Most of these bacteria call the gastrointestinal tract home. So, it’s not surprising that they have an enormous effect on our digestive system.²

Consequently, it makes sense that if you want to improve your digestive system, starting with your state of mind is a wise move. The brain influences the makeup of the gut’s microbiome, while the gut creates neuroactive compounds that have an effect on how the brain works.³

To break this down, let’s talk about something we all have that we wish we didn’t—stress. Stress has a particularly large bearing on gut health. It triggers the body’s “fight or flight” response, causing food digestion to slow down or even stop so that you can face a perceived threat. It’s not uncommon for stress to cause stomach pain and functional gastrointestinal disorders.

And, unfortunately for us, digestive problems increase stress. Creating a vicious cycle of mental and emotional stress that triggers digestive problems that in turn causes additional stress.⁴

See the pattern here? So, what do we do?

In extremely serious cases, those with stress-induced gastrointestinal problems should seek professional help to learn effective ways to cope with stress. Seeing a doctor and/or taking medication may improve gut health.

On the other hand, those who are dealing with everyday stress may want to start by managing stress without professional help. Meditation, making time for exercise, listening to calming music, and spending time relaxing at the end of a busy day are all effective ways to reduce stress.⁶

So, if reducing stress can help to improve your gut health, can a healthy microbiome help to reduce the symptoms of stress? The answer is yes!⁷

Support your healthy gut microbiome by weeding out contaminants, seeding with probiotics, feeding the good microbes with prebiotics, and protecting with a daily multivitamin.

Your mind affects your gut in a BIG way. Changing the way you think about things, people, or situations can mean the difference between a healthy microbiome and an unbalanced gut.

References

2. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2792171/
3. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3448089/