

# H1: 5 Simple Tips to Support Your Gut Health Right Now

**Meta description:** Wondering how to improve your gut health? These five simple tips will nourish your gut and keep your digestion strong.

Wondering how to improve your gut health? You're not alone. It's estimated that *70 million Americans* deal with chronic digestive issues. (1)

Whether you're one of them, or whether you're just looking to improve your overall health and vitality – healing your gut can be game-changing.

Why's that? Well, 70% of your immune system lives in your gut. (2) Your gut health also has a *huge* impact on your state of mind. So much so that scientists have dubbed the gut your "second brain." In fact, 95% of serotonin, your "feel-good" neurotransmitter, is made in your gut. (3)

And the best way to improve your gut health? Take care of your microbiome.

## H2: What is the Microbiome?

Believe it or not, you are more bacteria than you are human! In fact, there are *100 trillion microbes* living in and on your body. (4) Your microbiome is that unique collection of bacteria, viruses and fungi that exist in and on your body. The majority of them live in your digestive tract.

Your microbiome enhances your immunity, lowers inflammation, helps digest your food, protects you from disease, and much more.

Luckily, improving your gut health need not be complicated. With some simple changes to your diet and lifestyle, your microbiome can thrive – and so can *you*. Read on to discover *five tips* to do just that.

## H2: Tip #1: Eat the Rainbow

You know how some children are picky eaters? They happily eat chicken nuggets every day but throw a fit at the sight of broccoli?

Well, your beneficial bacteria have their favorite foods too. Different bacterial strains live on the surfaces of their favorite fruits and veggies. When you eat those foods, those bacteria become part of your own unique microbiome.

Studies have found that the more diverse your *diet* is, the more diverse your microbiome will be. (5) They've also found that people with lower microbiome diversity are more prone to disease. (6)

So, for optimal gut health, you want your microbiome as diverse as possible. But if you're eating the same foods on repeat, that limits your microbiome (*and* your immunity).

Luckily, you can easily enhance your gut just by eating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables. Not only will your gut thank you, but your body will get an assortment of vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients to boot. Win-win.

## H2: Tip #2: Get Your Fill of Fiber (...Especially Prebiotics)

Your microbiome is often compared to the soil in a garden. If you want your garden to thrive, you feed it compost. If you want your *microbiome* to thrive -- you need to feed it as well. It's food of choice? Fiber.

While your body can digest protein, fats, and carbs, it cannot digest fiber. But your beneficial bacteria *can*. Foods rich in these bacteria-friendly fibers are called prebiotics. (7)

Prebiotic foods encourage the growth of your friendly bacteria. Your gut bacteria ferment them, use them as fuel, and then produce short chain fatty acids. This is important stuff, as short chain fatty acids are known to strengthen your gut lining.

Eating plenty of fiber-rich fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains helps you feel full, bulks your stools, and moves your food through your digestive tract. And adding in a couple servings of prebiotic foods daily will keep your gut bacteria well-fed.

The following foods are rich sources of prebiotics: (8)

- Onions
- Garlic
- Leeks
- Chicory root
- Jerusalem artichokes
- Asparagus
- Bananas
- Beans
- Apples
- Lentils
- Chickpeas
- Barley
- Oats

## H2: Tip #3: Drink Plenty of Water

One of the easiest ways to improve your gut health is to stay hydrated. Your body is made up of about 60% water. (9) Water helps your body digest and absorb your food, transport nutrients, produce saliva, and much more.

Staying hydrated has also been found to improve your energy levels, brain function, *and* relieve constipation.

This can be especially important if you've increased your fiber intake. While fiber-rich foods bulk your stool, water is needed to push it through your digestive tract. Don't drink enough, and it's easy to get backed up.

### **H3: How Much Water Should You Drink?**

Many health experts recommend you drink around eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day. That works out to about half a gallon. But if you're exercising or live in a warm climate, you'll need even more.

### **H3: With Hydration, Timing is Key**

Your body does important cleanup while you're sleeping. That cleanup requires water. When you wake up, be sure to drink a couple glasses of water to rehydrate your body.

When *shouldn't* you drink water? Avoid drinking water with meals, as this can dampen the digestive fire. Also avoid drinking water too close to bedtime, as this can interfere with your sleep.

## **H2: Tip #4: Slow Down and Chew Your Food**

Digestion doesn't start in your stomach. It starts in your mouth. And chewing is what makes the magic happen.

Chewing breaks your food down into smaller particles, making your stomach's job easier. It also triggers the release of digestive enzymes, improving your digestion and absorption of nutrients. (10)

Digestion takes a *huge* amount of your body's energy. Chewing eases that burden, allowing that energy to be rerouted to healing and repair.

Unfortunately, in our fast-paced world many people wolf down their food or eat on the run. This not only leads to crummy digestion, but it can also put you at risk for bacterial overgrowth. Undigested chunks of food serve as a feast for bad bacteria, which may lead to heartburn, bloating, constipation, and flatulence.

Chewing can also prevent overeating. Did you know it can take your body around 20 minutes to realize you're full? If you eat too fast, you miss those cues.

On the flip side, taking the time to chew your food well tells your body, "Hey, you're eating!" This triggers your body's stomach acid production, allowing you to digest protein properly.

### **H3: Chewing 101: Tips to Get You Started**

Need help making this a habit? Here's a few tips to help upgrade your chewing game:

- Aim to chew your food around 30 times per mouthful. (11)
- Don't want to count? Just chew until your food is the consistency of applesauce.
- Take smaller bites or use a smaller fork.
- Put your fork down between bites to encourage slowing down.
- Eat sitting down and preferably screen-free. This'll help your body ease into "rest and digest" mode.

## H2: Tip #5: Eat Fermented Foods and Take Probiotics

Remember how I said the more diverse your microbiome is, the healthier your gut? Well, eating fermented foods and taking probiotics are two powerful ways to increase your microbial diversity.

Fermented foods have gone through fermentation, a process where sugars are broken down by bacteria and yeast. Fermentation boosts the enzymes and nutritional value in these foods and nourishes the gut with friendly bacteria.

If you're looking to improve your gut health, aim for a couple daily servings of fermented foods such as:

- Sauerkraut
- Yogurt (choose unsweetened or low sugar varieties)
- Kefir
- Kombucha
- Miso
- Natto
- Tempeh
- Pickled vegetables

When shopping for fermented foods, always check the label for “contains live and active cultures” to ensure they're probiotic-rich.

Not a fan of fermented foods? Or just want to give your gut health an extra boost? Taking a daily probiotic will do just that.

Probiotic supplements contain live beneficial cultures. While your gut has both good and bad bacteria, taking a daily probiotic can help tip the scale so the good guys outnumber the bad.

This is extremely important considering the majority of your immune system lives in your gut.

Studies have found probiotics to be *especially* helpful for people recovering from antibiotics or experiencing chronic digestive issues. (12) Best of all, taking probiotics daily is a simple and easy way to improve your gut health – so you'll be less likely to get sick in the first place.

## H2: Takeaways

Recap time! Which of the five gut-loving tips are you most excited to try?

1. Aim for colorful meals with a variety of fruits and veggies.
2. Fiber is your friend. Eat prebiotics to keep your gut fueled.
3. Stay hydrated to keep things moving.
4. Don't rush your meals...and chew!
5. Take a regular probiotic and add in fermented foods.

While healing your gut doesn't happen overnight, making healthy dietary and lifestyle choices is how it all begins. Armed with the five tips above and a little willingness to try new things will put you on the path to better gut health soon enough.

Resources:

1. <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/about-niddk/strategic-plans-reports/opportunities-challenges-digestive-diseases-research-recommendations-national-commission>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2515351/>
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5526216/>
4. <https://www.micropia.nl/en/discover/stories/on-and-in-you/>
5. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25498959/>
6. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27110483/>
7. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3705355/>
8. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/19-best-prebiotic-foods>
9. <https://www.webmd.com/diet/features/6-reasons-to-drink-water#1>
10. <https://health.usnews.com/health-news/blogs/eat-run/2015/03/10/5-reasons-you-should-chew-your-food>
11. <https://www.healthline.com/health/how-many-times-should-you-chew-your-food>
12. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25157183/>