

Gut Health 101: Nutrition and Lifestyle Tips to Keep Your Digestive System on Track

A healthy gut microbiota plays a key role in managing digestive symptoms, and there is a clear role for probiotics, prebiotics, and [synbiotics](#). Nutrition and lifestyle factors play crucial roles too and can trigger or worsen digestive symptoms directly or indirectly by altering the microbiota and compromising the gut lining:¹

- **Frequent anxiety or stress.** Stress and anxiety affect how the entire digestive system functions, likely through the gut-brain axis. Stress management techniques like yoga, meditation, gentle exercise, or cognitive behavioral therapy can help.
- **Overweight or obesity.** Obesity can affect gut motility and increases inflammation. Modest weight loss may help improve GI function, and diet changes like eating smaller meals, eating more slowly, and intermittent fasting can promote weight loss and alleviate digestive symptoms.
- **A diet low in fiber.** Fiber is essential for normal stool frequency and consistency. A higher-fiber diet also nourishes the gut microbiota. Adding more [low-FODMAP](#) soluble fiber foods (oats, bananas, carrots, and kiwi) can promote bowel regularity without excess gas and bloating.
- **Eating a western-style diet high in refined carbohydrates, fats, and sugar.** Diets high in ultra-processed foods are associated with lower fiber intake and they promote abdominal obesity and inflammation. There is also some evidence that Western diets cause unfavorable changes in the microbiota.² Individuals who rely on these foods for convenience or out of habit can benefit from working with a dietitian to explore healthier alternatives.
- **Long-term use of certain medications.** Antibiotics are known to kill off beneficial bacteria, often triggering diarrhea. Other drugs may also affect digestive health and function, including opioids, proton pump inhibitors, NSAIDs, and laxatives.³ While medications are often necessary, ensure people know the potential risks of overusing certain medications. Often, diet and lifestyle changes can minimize their need.
- **Environmental exposures.** Exposure to chemicals like cigarette smoke, bisphenols, phthalates, heavy metals, and pesticides might affect digestive health by altering the [gut microbiota](#).⁴ These exposures are often overlooked in conventional healthcare assessments.

Managing common digestive complaints requires a personalized approach. The good news is that you can often improve your digestive health with the right combination of diet, lifestyle changes, and microbiome support.

Products that SFI Health offers that support these guidelines include: [Ther-biotic® Synbiotic](#), [Ther-Biotic® Vital-Zymes™ \(Complete\)](#), and [Cortisol Management](#).

REFERENCES:

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