

How to Cultivate a Healthy Gut

EATING HYGIENE

- Digestion begins in the mouth, so make sure you chew your food as much as possible to aid that process.
- Make eating a priority by having Meal times and sitting down to eat.
- Relax and breathe deep a few times before diving in. If you feel rushed or stress it will disrupt digestion.
- Do not drink too much liquids during meal time. This will dilute stomach acid and impair digestion. Save hydration for in between meals
- Slow down! Try to make eating last 20 minutes. Put your fork down in between bites and savor your food.

TIPS TO DESTRESS

1. **Exercise:** spend 30 minutes daily doing something active, exercise class, weight training, high intensity interval training, walking, running, gardening, dancing are good options. Exercise also boosts the immune system, helps manage our weight, builds muscle and helps strengthen our bones and is a great stress reducer.
2. **3-4-5 breathing exercise:** Breathe in 3 counts, hold four counts and exhale five counts. The longer exhale helps to activate our parasympathetic nervous system which relaxes us. Do this five minutes, three times a day.
3. **Daily affirmations:** say something positive about yourself or your life every morning. Say it out loud, believe it! This is so important to change habits and boost confidence and start to love yourself and your life.
4. **Walk outside** near nature as much as possible.
5. **Sit outside** with nature as much as possible.
6. **Take social media breaks.** If you find you are on your phone looking at Facebook or other social media platforms, set times to take breaks. Try to get off all electronics an hour or more before bedtime.

7. **Laugh every day.** Find something or someone who makes you belly laugh. There is also laughter therapy, so if you can find something like that where you live give it a go, or just find something funny every day.
8. **Schedule time for yourself every day for 15 minutes.** It can be dancing, reading, talking to a good friend, listening to your favorite music, but not social media, TV or electronics.
9. **Start a gratitude journal:** At the end of day, write down three things you are grateful for. Be specific, like, “I am grateful for my spouse, who helped me empty the dishwasher,” or, “I am grateful for being able to live in this house,” or, “I am grateful for this gut health group.”
10. **Try meditation:** start with five minutes and work your way up to 15 minutes a day. Be consistent. There is an app called Calm that can help you get started the right way.

FOOD BASICS

- **Reduce or avoid white, processed foods and sugars.** Avoid artificial sugars like Splenda, aspartame, or Sweet-n-Low. Anything that says “diet” or “sugar-free” probably has these in them. As an alternative, use natural sweeteners like honey, dates, and maple syrup—but use them sparingly.
- **Drink mostly water.** Some sparkling water is okay, as well. Herbal teas and green tea are other great options. When it comes to alcohol, the less the better. As a general guideline, stick to 1-2 drinks no more than 3 days per week. Avoid buying plastic water bottles due to BPA, poor quality of the water and to help limit waste. A good water purifier that is affordable is the Berkey. It makes water taste so clean! See my resource document for more information
- **Focus on as many whole foods and veggies as you can in one day.** The rainbow chart will be helpful. Literally eat the rainbow of colors each day. If you are not a big veggie eater, try to add one extra veggie serving in each day. This is the concept of crowding out. Instead of focusing on what you can’t have, focus on what you can, and add in as many nutritious foods as you can each day. Eventually, you will be eating less of the bad and more of the good.
- **For veggies and fruit, organic does matter.** Organic veggies and fruits have significantly less pesticides on them. To know what you should buy organic, the Environmental Working Group (ewg.org) has their “Clean Fifteen” and “Dirty Dozen” lists each year. There have been links to RoundUp, the main pesticide being used on our crops, contributing to cancer. Avoid canned foods as much as possible due to the lining of cans being BPA, which is a known endocrine disruptor and destructor of our gut bugs. There are some cans that are BPA free like Muir Glenn but most of the time this can be avoided.

- **Use olive oil, avocado oil, and coconut oil instead of canola or vegetable oils.**
- Vegetable oils can be GMO and higher in the inflammatory Omega 6 fatty acids. Grass-fed butter or ghee is also a good option. Don't be afraid of the good fats! We need them for brain health.
- **If you eat meat:** reduce the portion and look for grass-fed, pasture-raised cows or chickens or local farms that let cows eat grass and roam, let chickens eat grass, and feed them a normal diet instead of corn feed. Avoid processed meats altogether: cured meats, lunch meats, hot dogs, bacon, etc. If you must have them, find nitrate-free options.
- **The same goes for eggs.** My favorite brand is Vital Farms: no antibiotics, no growth hormones. Conventional cows and animals are given antibiotics and growth hormones to make them grow faster and be fatter at slaughter or produce more milk. Then, we eat and drink this, and it is contributing to poor gut health and excess hormones in our systems.

REDUCE TOXIN EXPOSURE

Our environment contains over 80,000 man-made chemicals, many approved by the government with no safety testing. Known carcinogens and drugs end up in our food and water supply and can increase the risk of cancers, disrupt our hormones, and contribute to other illnesses. We need to reduce our toxic load as much as possible and improve how well our bodies remove toxins.

Look closely at your cleaning products, personal care products, candles, scents, and pesticides. Use resources from EWG, Skin Deep, Think Dirty and the Good Guide to check your products.

Most women use about 12 products in the morning and can be exposed to over 168 chemicals before leaving the bathroom! Men use about 6.

My favorite cleaner is Branch Basics, a plant-based concentrate that can be used for your entire house. I like Molly Suds for laundry, and the Honest Company and Norwex have good products as well. You can also use essential oils to clean.

Also assess your kitchen, use glass as much as possible, and toss those non-stick skillet. Cast iron, ceramic and stainless steel are your better options and they last forever! Use glass storage containers, get a reusable water bottle and ditch the plastic water bottles.

Improve your body's ability to remove toxins. Your body eliminates toxins in 4 ways:

1. **Sweating**
2. **Breathing**
3. **Urination**

4. Bowel movements

To avoid sabotaging your detoxing efforts, here are a few suggestions:

- **Drink enough water** that you are urinating frequently. If your urine is not light in color, drink more water. Your urine should have a light straw color. However, if you are taking B vitamins, your urine will likely look bright yellow for most of the day.
- **Do gentle physical activities** such as yoga or brisk walking to enhance sweat. If you have access to a **sauna** or **steam room** . . . great! If your schedule permits, try using it daily for 10 to 20 minutes as tolerated. It has been shown that sauna therapy increases the excretion of heavy metals and fat-soluble chemicals from the body.
Note: If you are chronically ill or take medication, be sure to get your doctor's permission before starting sauna or steam therapy. When your physician has cleared you, start with short time increments and gradually increase time as tolerated.
- Remember to drink at least 16 ounces of water before entering the sauna and the same amount after therapy to flush the mobilized toxins.
- **You should be having bowel movements daily;** otherwise, you'll reabsorb the toxins in your gut. If you are not having daily BMs, consider taking an herbal laxative at bedtime. Herbal laxatives should include cascara or senna and can be found in capsule or tea preparations. Also, magnesium works great (200-400 mg daily). Make sure you're eating high-fiber foods like fruits and veggies and drinking half your body weight in ounces of water daily.
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SLEEP TIPS

Keep same schedule of sleep/wake hours

Dark cool room

No electronics, don't use phone as alarm

Early morning light exposure, have tea or water outside in the morning Shut off electronics/blue light exposure 90 minutes before bed Herbal tea, turn lights down

Gratitude journal, breathing exercises Magnesium can help

Always talk with doctor if you need more help Try to avoid medications, if possible

Further resources:

Books:

Eat to beat disease by Dr. William Li
How to make disease disappear by Dr. Rangan Chatterjee
10 day detox by Dr. Mark Hyman
Fiber fueled by Dr. Mark Bulsiewicz
The stress solution by Dr. Rangan Chatterjee

Websites:

www.ewg.org
www.100daysofrealfood.com
www.alisonwensrich.com
www.branchbasics.com
www.heartmath.com

Apps:

Calm app
Headspace app
Insight timer app

Podcasts:

The cancer recovery movement
Feel better live more
Doctors Farmacy
Rich Roll

Referral links:

Branch basics: non toxic cleaning products for the house
<http://branchbasics.refr.cc/alisonhall76>

Daily harvest: healthy food delivery with minimal prep work. Use this link for \$25 off your first order
https://daily-harvest.com/r/RE-KRRKKGK?utm_source=ReferAFriend&utm_campaign=welcome2&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=account

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