

How to Feed A Happy Gut

The most important thing you can do to improve upstairs-downstairs communication is to eat a wide variety of legumes and produce, says Jeff Leach, cofounder of the American Gut Project. His data suggests that people who eat more than 25 types of plants weekly have healthier gut bacteria than people who eat fewer than 10. (The measly American average: less than 5.)

A variety of plant fiber equals a balanced diet for the healthy bacteria deep down in your digestive tract. Simple carbohydrates are digested higher up, which leaves little nourishment for the good bugs. If these helpful bacteria decline in numbers, unfriendly strains, plus fungi and parasites, can take over, stirring up digestive (and, the theory holds, psychological) distress. To make sure that doesn't happen, these are the foods you need.

Get a Shot of Inulin

Inulin is a soluble fiber that's basically a superfood for healthy bacteria. Note that some of these contain gas- and bloat-causing proteins; increase your intake of them slowly if they cause digestive discomfort for you.

- ▣ Asparagus
- ▣ Bananas
- ▣ Broccoli
- ▣ Garlic
- ▣ Jerusalem artichokes
- ▣ Leeks
- ▣ Onions



Feed on Fermented

These foods offer a double payoff: a load of helpful bacteria from the outside world, plus fiber for the gut bacteria to eat.

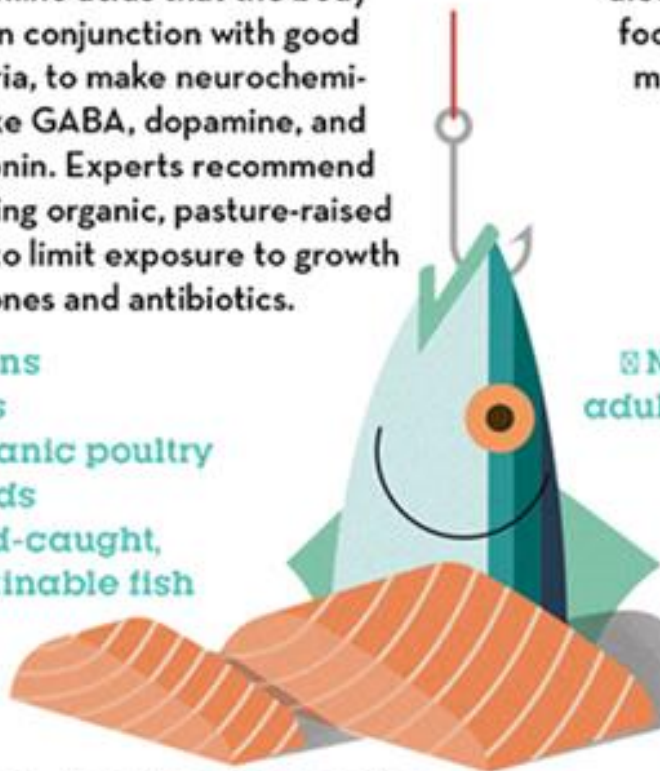
- ▣ Kimchi
- ▣ Miso
- ▣ Sauerkraut
- ▣ Tempeh
- ▣ Yogurt (with fruit)



Pile On Protein

Healthy sources of protein provide amino acids that the body uses, in conjunction with good bacteria, to make neurochemicals like GABA, dopamine, and serotonin. Experts recommend choosing organic, pasture-raised meat to limit exposure to growth hormones and antibiotics.

- ☒ Beans
- ☒ Nuts
- ☒ Organic poultry
- ☒ Seeds
- ☒ Wild-caught, sustainable fish



Eat Fat

Considering that the brain is 60% fat, dietary fat should be considered brain food—especially foods that are unanimously smart choices, such as these.

- ☒ Avocados
- ☒ Coconut
- ☒ Fish (again, wild-caught, sustainable)
- ☒ Ghee (clarified butter)
- ☒ Nuts and seeds (including unadulterated seed and nut butters)
- ☒ Olive oil (extra virgin)



Add Antioxidants

Foods rich in the class of antioxidants called polyphenols can tamp down inflammation (which can cause depression). Even better: New research suggests that polyphenols help nourish friendly gut bacteria.

- ☒ Apples
- ☒ Berries
- ☒ Cacao (best: dark bars at 70% concentration or higher)
- ☒ Citrus
- ☒ Flaxseed
- ☒ Green tea
- ☒ Herbs
- ☒ Red wine
- ☒ Spices (especially ginger, rosemary, and turmeric)



Go Easy on Refined

Processed barley, rye, and wheat can drive up blood sugar and promote inflammation. Opt for the whole grain versions, plus these alternatives.

- ☒ Amaranth
- ☒ Buckwheat
- ☒ Quinoa

