

What's your gut type?

We all know that a balanced gut is the key to better health, but knowing what steps to take in order to correct bacterial deficiencies is a different story entirely. That's why we've consulted the biggest names in health and wellbeing to provide you with a comprehensive guide to connecting with your gut

THE BASICS

Boosting good bacteria for overall health is nothing new. For years we've been guzzling down bottles of Yakult and Actimel in an attempt to top up the good stuff. But aside from the knowledge that we're doing something nice for our bodies, we're seldom given much more information on the topic. What's actually going on down there and why are we constantly prompted to keep our bacteria in check? Jonathan Hobbs, vice president of the FHT (Federation of Holistic Therapists), explains: "The relationship between your gut's microbiota (microorganisms) and immune system is crucial for maintaining good health. If this relationship breaks down, it can lead to small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO), which has been linked to some of the more common symptoms associated with digestive disorders like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Research has shown that a number of everyday foods can help to support healthy gut bacteria and enhance overall wellbeing, so make sure you're topping up on the five Bs on the right."

FIVE 'BS' FOR GOOD GUT HEALTH

Bananas: These tropical treats are packed with pectin, which helps to improve stool quality, and resistant starch, which helps to maintain a healthy lining in the large intestine.



Broccoli (and other cruciferous vegetables):

These food types are often avoided by IBS sufferers as they increase the production of hydrogen sulphide, which can trigger flatulence-related symptoms. However, as well as containing fibre, cruciferous vegetables contain natural components called glucosinolates, which have antiviral, antibacterial and anti-inflammatory effects.



Blueberries: Studies have shown that blueberries may increase and diversify the gut's microbiota, support the immune system and improve memory.

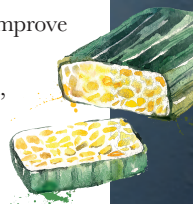


Beans: Legumes can support the health of the gut by releasing short chain fatty acids (SCFA). Research suggests that SCFA can help to strengthen cells in the intestines, enhance the absorption of micronutrients and aid weight management by helping us to feel full.



Beet radish (sauerkraut, kimchi, tempeh, soy sauce and other fermented plant-based foods):

These foods are considered probiotics that improve the health of the intestine, support the immune system, decrease digestive disorders and potentially reduce the risk of bowel cancer by enhancing the population of healthy microbiota within the gut, which counter unhealthy bacteria.



UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

US-based author and clinical nutritionist Dr Axe believes that we can all be placed into one of five bacterial imbalance categories and that we should be approaching our gut health accordingly. Even better, it's his belief that the developments in probiotic research mean that we can identify our gut types via our emotional and dietary habits! Let the examination begin...

Stressed

PERSONAL PROFILE: You're a stereotypical type-A personality – married to the job, incapable of relaxation and addicted to coffee

The diagnosis: When stress hormones are high, blood flow is diverted away from the gut, causing problems with the production of good bacteria.

Symptoms: A stressed gut type is seen in those with adrenal fatigue and is characterised by a loss in libido, poor focus and trouble sleeping.

Causes: Leading a stressful lifestyle or career is a given, but stimulants such as caffeine, alcohol, sugar and grains can exacerbate the condition.

Treatment: When it comes to dealing with your stress, try relaxing exercises such as yoga and meditation. Nutrition-wise, aim to get more B-vitamins via animal proteins.

Immune

PERSONAL PROFILE: Are you a bit of a perfectionist with a tendency to feel insecure? Now you can chalk it down to your gut bacteria!

The diagnosis: An immune gut is caused by food allergies and intolerances which tip the bacterial scale in favour of the bad guys.

Symptoms: At its worst, this stomach type can lead to autoimmune disease and IBS. Other ailments include pain, gas and bloating after large meals.

Causes: It occurs when someone is unaware or actively ignoring a food allergen, especially gluten and dairy.

Treatment: You will need to find the source of the intolerance. Try monitoring your symptoms whilst excluding certain food groups. This will help you work out which triggers you need to eliminate from your diet.

Toxic

PERSONAL PROFILE: Impatient? Check. Easily angered? Double check! And we bet you're a glutton for processed fast foods, too!

The diagnosis: Gut toxicity occurs as result of inflammation throughout the liver and intestines.

Symptoms: You'll see the effects of this gut type in everything from your skin to the way you move. It can cause conditions such as gall bladder disease, rosacea and lethargy.

Causes: Unfortunately, it's your love for convenience food that's causing your health hiccups. Foods that are high in fat, sugar and chemicals are the key contributors to this bacterial imbalance.

Treatment: We're pleased to confirm that the prognosis is hopeful, however. Stock up raw green veg and avoid non-organic meat and dairy.

Gastric

PERSONAL PROFILE: You're never one to do things by halves. If you're happy, you're ecstatic and if you're angry, you're livid. It's this same passion that results in your tendency to inhale your food in large portions.

The diagnosis: Gastric gut almost always occurs as a result of a slow-moving digestive system. When your system is backed up and extra strain is placed on the digestive organs, it can throw bacteria levels severely out of whack!

Symptoms: If you're the owner of a gastric gut, you'll know it! Indicators such as infrequent bowel movements, stomach cramps, bloating and regular bouts of acid reflux will be constantly playing havoc on your system.

Causes: Taking on too much work and overexerting yourself are the

main causes of this stomach type, but it can also be attributed to a diet lacking in fibre as well as inadequate hydration.

Treatment: You should take care to avoid habits that may hinder your digestion further. Such habits include not chewing properly, overeating and the frequent use of antacids. It's also worth mixing up your eating routine; opt for several small, light meals rather than a hefty portion. Dr Axe recommends a glass of warm water and apple cider vinegar before meals to lower the pH in your stomach.



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Candida

PERSONAL PROFILE: Your friends describe you as an anxious worrywart and your favourite snacks are usually filled with, covered by or dipped in chocolate.

The diagnosis: This type of gut imbalance is due to an overgrowth of yeast in the digestive tract.

Symptoms: Those with a candida stomach type often experience unexplained fluctuations in weight, a slow metabolism, phlegmy coughs and feelings of fatigue and exhaustion.

Causes: It is usually brought on by a diet that is high in sugars and is also common amongst those who

extensively use antibiotics and birth control pills.

Treatment: We hate to break it to you, but avoiding sweet treats is the best place to start. That doesn't just mean cakes and doughnuts, however. Dairy and simple carbs should be consumed sparingly as well. In addition, you should up your intake of starchy veg, nutrient-boosting broths and fermented foods.

If you're still unsure which category you fall into, take Dr Axe's quiz at draxe.com to find out. Or, better yet, pick up a copy of his latest book, *Eat Dirt* (£14.99, Bluebird).

No matter your gut type, these products will help your gut flora to thrive

Jarrow Ultra Jarro-Dophilus 50 Billion, £39.99, bodykind.com



Adult Acidophilus & Bifidus 25 Billion, £13.95, provenprobiotics.co.uk



St Helen's Farm Semi-Skimmed Goats Milk, £1.60, Tesco

Proiotic 30 Capsules, £24, proiotic.co.uk

