



Gut health

Research has shown a link between positive mental and physical health, and the gastrointestinal tract (gut). There is still much to learn, however recent studies have shown the gut's link to immune function, weight management and mental health. There are more than 100 million neurons in our gut, which is why it is known as our second brain.

How do we maintain a healthy gut?

It mostly comes down to diet, but specifically probiotics and prebiotics. Probiotics are bacteria found in fermented foods that have health benefits. Prebiotics are a type of dietary fibre that feed the bacteria in the gut.

Examples of probiotic foods:

- ▶ Sauerkraut
- ▶ Yoghurt
- ▶ Kimchi
- ▶ Kombucha tea
- ▶ Kefir (dairy or non-dairy)
- ▶ Non-pasteurised pickled vegetables

Examples of prebiotic foods:

- ▶ Legumes
- ▶ Oats
- ▶ Bananas
- ▶ Green leafy vegetables



Balanced healthy lifestyle

Eating a balance of these foods, matched with healthy lifestyle choices such as regular exercise, good sleep routines, limited saturated fat and sugary foods, will help improve your gut health as well as your overall wellbeing.

If you have any medical or dietary concerns, consult your GP before introducing these foods to your diet, as some fermented foods may not be ideal for you to consume.

14 DAY HEALTH FOCUS

Day 1 – Social

Have a virtual coffee date using apps like Zoom, Facetime, Skype, Whatsapp or House Party and set some time aside to hang out with a friend.

Day 2 – Professional

Get out the pen and paper and create a routine for your workday. This is important if you are now working from home. Plan breaks with fresh air when you can.

Day 3 – Physical

Aim to get on your feet and walk for five minutes every hour during the day. Bring some strength exercises into it, such as lunges, squats, push-ups, step-ups.

Day 4 – Emotional

Only look at the news twice a day (morning and afternoon). The news can be full of doom and gloom, so limit your exposure and control your news sources.

Day 5 – Your choice

From binge watching TV to a run at the park – you decide today!

Day 6 – Social

Find a way to have a physically distant catch-up with friends and family. A driveway catch up with neighbours, quiz nights through video call, or a good old-fashioned phone call.

Day 7 – Professional

Listen to some productive music. Check out working from home playlists on Spotify or Apple Music. Or pull out an old CD you used to love.

Day 8 – Physical

Go for a 30 min walk. Also, don't forget those strength exercises, or maybe try yoga today? Increase your reps or intensity if you found Day three easy.

Day 9 – Emotional

Want to get away for a bit? Reading a good book is an excellent way to transport your mind to a different world, and use your imagination. Search "Booktopia best sellers" for ideas online.

Day 10 – You decide

Stuck for inspiration? Maybe focus on healthy eating, or you could make a recipe you never have time for.

Day 11 – Social

Socialise with friends by watching a movie together through the Netflix Party, or House Party apps.

Day 12 – Professional

Turn down time into productive time. Think about ways to use extra time to study, complete an online course, or learn about something you are interested in.

Day 13 – Physical

Make today a relaxing day – focus on stretching your lower back, glutes and hamstrings, or wherever you feel tightness. Download the Downdog app for guided yoga and stretches to suit your level.

Day 14 – Emotional

Perform one random act of kindness today. It could be as simple as a compliment to a stranger, or delivering some milk to a neighbour.

Here are some resources to keep you on track –

Downdog yoga app (Available on Android and Apple devices)
Smiling Mind app (Available on Android and Apple devices)
Nike training app (Available on Android and Apple devices)



Quick kimchi

What is kimchi? It is a fermented Korean cabbage dish traditionally served with rice, noodles or soups. Kimchi is highly regarded for its health benefits, including improved gut bacteria and probiotics.

Preparation time – 20 minutes (plus an hour salting and overnight fermenting)

Makes six to eight serves

Ingredients

- ▶ Chinese cabbage
- ▶ 3 garlic cloves
- ▶ 2cm piece of ginger
- ▶ 2tbsp fish sauce (optional)
- ▶ 2tbsp chilli paste (to taste)
- ▶ Tbsp. caster sugar
- ▶ 3tbsp rice vinegar
- ▶ 8 small grated radishes
- ▶ 2 grated carrots
- ▶ 4 shredded spring onions
- ▶ Serve with rice noodles or white rice

Method

- ▶ Slice the cabbage into 2.5cm strips. Place in a bowl with a tablespoon of sea salt and then set aside for an hour.
- ▶ Meanwhile, make the kimchi paste by blending garlic, ginger, fish sauce, chilli sauce, sugar and rice vinegar together.
- ▶ After an hour, rinse the cabbage under cold running water, drain and dry thoroughly. Transfer to a large bowl and toss through the paste, along with the radishes, carrot and spring onions.
- ▶ Serve straight away with rice noodles/white rice, or pack into a large jar, seal and leave to ferment at room temperature overnight, and then chill.

NOTE: Kimchi will keep in the fridge for up to 2 weeks - the flavour will improve the longer it's left.



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