



How to improve your gut and brain health with the FODMAP Diet



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Introduction

“You are what you eat” is not just a phrase.



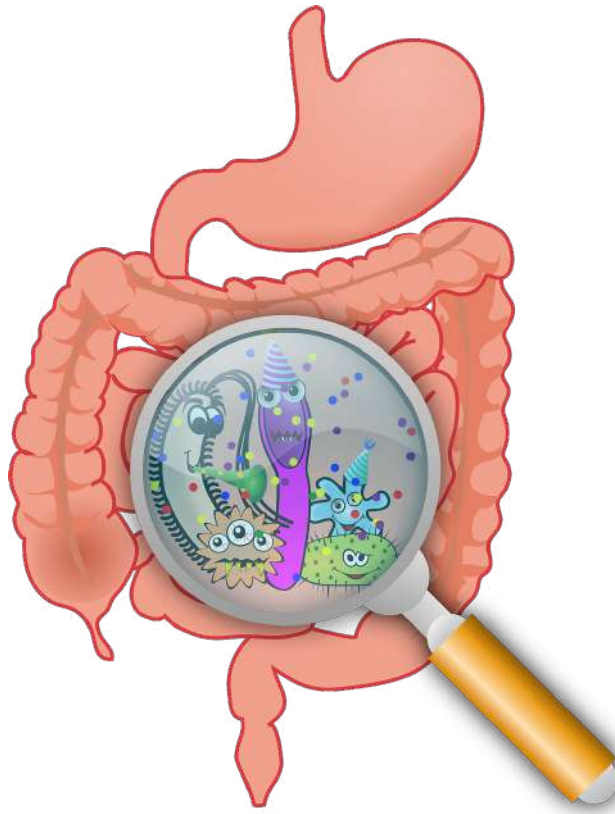
Numerous studies have shown the link between a diet, gut health, and mood. People who eat foods rich in probiotics usually have a healthy gut flora and feel better. They are less prone to stress, anxiety, depression, and autoimmune diseases.

The effects of diet on the human brain,
scientists explain by gut-brain connection.



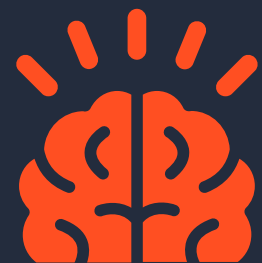
Importance of Gut Health

Your digestive system is one of the most complex systems in your body.



Its functions don't end up with decomposition and absorption of food. According to recent studies [1], this system is essential for your emotional well-being, your immunity, and the way of thinking.

The ability of your gut to affect such vital parts has been recognized as the second brain.



Your Second Brain

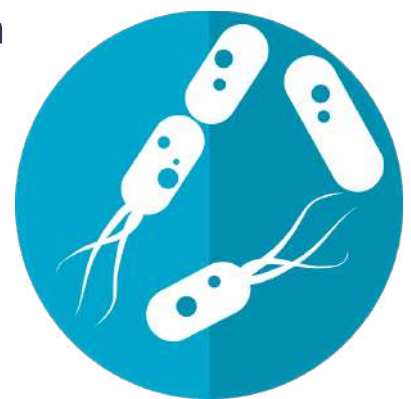
The scientific term for this small brain is the enteric nervous system—ENS.

Inside the mucous membrane, it contains more than 200 million nerve cells. The neurons from your gut send signals to your upper brain thus affecting how you feel. These two brains communicate by sending neurotransmitters in both directions. When your gut sends serotonin, for example, it activates the hypothalamus, the part of your brain that manages your emotions.

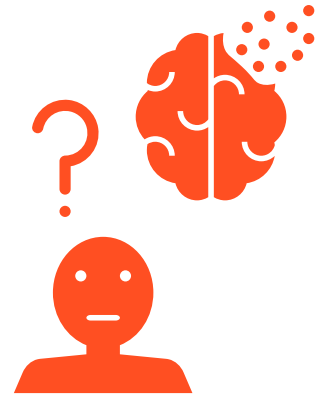


Having that in mind, it is no wonder that more and more studies show the link between mental health and gut.[2] The most obvious link scientists have noticed in people with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).[3] Many of these people with disturbed bowel function usually develop anxiety and depression in parallel. Scientists explain that these people have more active digestive systems that react stronger than in healthy people.

However, recent studies suggest that this condition is treatable.[4] The solution might be in enhancing a so-called gut flora. Gut microbiota is the most complex ecosystem of bacteria that significantly affect other biological processes in the human body. **It hosts trillions of bacteria that may protect your mental, emotional, and physical health.**



As already said, people with chronic intestinal distress may suffer from anxiety, depression, impaired immune system, autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis and Alzheimer's. Poor gut microbiota may also contribute to developing Parkinson's disease.^[5] Scientists believe that the culprit for Parkinson's disease might reflect in vagotomy, a resection of the vagus nerve in people with acid reflux.



Things you Can Do to Improve Your Gut Health

Since the many diseases may start in the gut, what you may want to do is to optimize your gut flora by changing your diet. One of the best ways to enhance the diversity of your microbiome is by introducing probiotics in your daily menu. You may want to eat more natural probiotics such as kimchi, kombucha, kefir, apple vinegar, ripened cheese, and sauerkraut. The good bacteria you may also find in fermented vegetables like pickles, eggplants, paprika, green tomatoes, cauliflowers, and carrots.

If you experience digestive symptoms or suffer from IBS, you may try a FODMAP diet in order to eliminate foods that disturb your intestines.



We are all different and different foods affect us in different ways. The huge value of the fodmap diet is it helps identify the foods that cause you to have gut issues.

Once you identify and eliminate those foods, you can improve your gut health and many other areas in your life that are highly correlated to it.



Once you can get control of your gut health, your brain function, mood and immunity should improve also.

What Is a Low FODMAP Diet?

The FODMAP diet is a shortage for fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides, and polyols. This type of diet is the elimination diet and its goal is to help you find out what foods trigger your gut reaction. FODMAPs are not unhealthy foods, but in some people, they may cause their digestive system to overreact like in people with irritable bowel syndrome.

You may apply a low-FODMAP diet by following this simple step-by-step process:

- 1** Limit FODMAP foods in your diet. In this phase, you may want to print the list of high-FODMAP foods or write down the worst of them and avoid them completely. Stick to these restrictions from 3 to 8 weeks.
- 2** Introduce one food at a time. Experts suggest adding small amounts of food and increasing it incrementally. You want to identify the problematic food and determine what amount is detrimental to your gut.
- 3** Adjust your diet to reflect your newly discovered preferences. In this phase, your goal is to diversify your diet and continue observing your body reactions to suspicious foods.

You may want to keep a food diary and write down what you eat, when you eat, and what were the effects of a certain food. Some people prefer using [apps to check what food to avoid and what food is safe](#) for GI tract.

HERE ARE TWO
POPULAR APPS:



[Monash FODMAP
Diet App](#)



[FODMAP
Friendly App](#)

The Biggest Foods to Avoid

The following four groups of food may trigger the symptoms in your digestive tract because of their ability to ferment in your bowel. When you think about foods to avoid, this list contains the highest FODMAP sources.



- ✓ **Oligosaccharides:** onions and garlic are fermentable foods high in FODMAPS and if you have stomach issues these would be the first 2 to try to eliminate. Other foods from this group to avoid are leek, scallion, wheat, rye, pear, watermelon, and legumes. Keep in mind this all depends on the person. 1 person may be perfectly fine eating leaks while another can experience major problems from them. You need to test.
- ✓ **Disaccharides:** milk, milk products, soft cheese, yogurt, and ice-cream. In general dairy products are not great for you. If your diet allows these ones probably should be avoided all together. The only one you may want to consider keeping is yogurt and kefir with live cultures for the probiotic benefits.
- ✓ **Monosaccharides:** apple, peach, honey, dried fruit, fruit juice, corn syrup, agave nectar, and alcohol. Some of these foods actually have tons of benefits. For example peaches, apples and honey can be ones that you eliminate last and try to bring back as quickly as possible.
- ✓ **Polyols:** sorbitol, xylitol, mannitol, and other sweetening agents. You may also want to experiment cutting prunes, chocolate, and jams.

Conclusion

Even though medical experts believe that a low-FODMAP diet doesn't help everyone with IBS or some other digestive issue, many people report feeling better. To get the most of it, you may want to consult your dietitian and learn more about these principles. The goal is to enrich your diet with more nutrients and minimize the risk of strong bowel reactions. This way, you may find out what foods trigger your digestive issues and what foods soothe your GI tract.

Sources

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