

# Cultivating a healthy gut



## How does the gut work?

It's important to understand why the gut is such a marvel at defending and protecting your body. The complexity of the gut and its link to our overall health is becoming an increasingly popular topic within the medical community. While more research is needed, evidence is growing that there may be a link between the health of the gut and resistance to many diseases, how food is processed and energy levels.<sup>1,2</sup>

### The vastness of your gut's defense team

There are about one hundred trillion microbes in your GI tract — about 95 percent of all the bacteria and microorganisms in your body. These tiny beneficial bacteria can act together as a physical barrier protecting your gut. They can also join together against pathogens (anything that causes a disease, like a virus or bad bacteria).

Scientists believe that gut microbes are responsible for many functions that are involved in immunity, the absorption of nutrients and metabolizing energy.

### The healthy diversity of gut flora

Gut flora is one of the terms used to describe the complex community of microorganisms that live in your GI tract. Another term is gut microbiota. It isn't just the volume of microbes that add up to a strong defense, it's the incredible diversity of that gut flora. Collectively, this ecosystem is called "the gut microbiome."

When the rich diversity of this ecosystem is diminished or disrupted, scientists believe that some of the following symptoms could be a result:<sup>2</sup>

- Upset stomach, including gas, bloating, constipation and diarrhea
- Unintentional weight changes
- Fragmented sleep
- Fatigue
- Autoimmune conditions
- Food intolerances, which can lead to nausea, bloating, gas or abdominal pain



Sources:

1. *Nature Outlook*, The Gut Microbiome, January 29, 2020. Available from [www.nature.com](http://www.nature.com).
2. Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Keeping a Healthy Gut, September 26, 2022. Available from [www.ars.usda.gov](http://www.ars.usda.gov).

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