



Food, Your Gut and Impact on Your Mood

If you feel happier in the warmer months and notice yourself eating a greater variety of fresh, seasonal produce compared to the cooler months, it may not just be the sunshine lifting your mood.

Ever wonder why you feel butterflies in your stomach when you are nervous or excited?

Or why you feel sick to your stomach with bad news?

Your gut bacteria (which is partly determined by what we eat) has been found to have a direct influence on our mood and emotions.

This connection is more formerly known as the gut-brain axis.

Through complex, intertwined pathways, this bacteria in our gut helps our body produce certain neurochemicals which help our brain regulate important processes such as memory, learning and how we feel.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE GUT-BRAIN CONNECTION?

The gut-brain axis works in a bi-directional (or both ways) communication network, which allows the brain to influence the gut and the gut to influence our brain.

This connection means that our mood can be directly influenced by what we eat, as certain hormones, namely serotonin (our mood and gut regulatory hormone) is released within our gut.

The variation of bacteria within your gut is determined ~ 50% by your diet. Your gut microbiome can be changed within a couple of days if you consume different foods than you were previously having.

If, for example, you only consumed one type of fruit or vegetable, one type of dairy or one type of grain food, your gut microbiome will not receive the diversity of bacteria that it needs to really thrive. Similarly, if most of the foods you consume are highly processed, you risk an increase/overgrowth in harmful bacteria that may result in long term inflammation of the gut wall. Both can have a direct influence on your mental state.

CAN YOUR GUT BACTERIA INFLUENCE FEELINGS OF ANXIETY?

Short answer – YES.

If a circumstance challenges our gut microbiota, be it stress, change in diet or another external factor, the physiology (or make up) of our microbiome can change. What can then happen, is our gut becomes increasingly permeable, allowing unhelpful bacteria to enter through the gut wall. These bacteria can cause inflammation within the intestine and this directly influences our state of mind.

HOW CAN I MAINTAIN A HEALTHY BALANCE OF BACTERIA IN MY GUT THROUGH DIET?

Whilst your gut bacteria will not solely be determined by what you eat, for the purpose of this post, we will focus on nutrition.

Instead of removing foods from your diet, look at this as an opportunity to add more foods in!

Variety = More Diversity!

INCLUDE HIGH FIBRE FOODS (These foods help stabilise and diversify the bacteria) | FOR EXAMPLE

- Whole Grain Breads / Cereals / Crackers
- Outer Skins of Fruit and Vegetables
- All Fruits and Vegetables
- Nuts and Seeds with Skin on
- Lentils, Kidney Beans, Chickpeas
- Oats , Psyllium Husk, Bran

ADD IN PRE-BIOTIC FOODS (These help the good bacteria flourish) | FOR EXAMPLE

- Vegetables: Artichokes, Garlic , Onions, Leek, Snow Peas, Cabbage, Shallots, Beetroot
- Legumes: Chickpeas, Lentils, Beans
- Fruit: Stone Fruit, Watermelon, Grapefruit, Fried Fruit
- Breads: Barley, Rye, Pasta
- Cereals: Bran, Oats
- Nuts & Seeds: Cashews, Pistachio Nuts

ADD IN SOME PRO-BIOTIC FOODS | FOR EXAMPLE

- Yogurt
- Kefir / Kimchi / Sauerkraut
- Miso
- Tempeh
- Sourdough

WHERE DO I START?

Focus on sustainable changes and strategies that suit your lifestyle. Some suggestions:

- Choose wholegrain breads and cereals over white bread
- Snack on nuts, fruit and seeds
- Add lentils, chickpeas, beans to soups and salads
- Eat whole fruit instead of drinking soft drink or juice
- Add Psyllium husk to your breakfast cereal or smoothies in the morning

Looking to optimise your gut health? We would love to work with you to find the right balance and quantity of these food mentioned above to make a real impact on your life! Investing in your health should start with what you put into your body through food. Our Dietitians are here to support you and the whole family build and sustain healthy gut bacteria, leading to a healthier life.

Contact us on 0499008451 or send us an email admin@optimumintake.com.au to book in your initial consultation.