EVERYDAY

GUT HEALTH CHECKLIST

Disclaimer

This guide is for educational purposes and is not medical advice. Nothing in this document is intended to diagnose, treat, or prevent disease. Any mention of herbs or nutritional supplements have not been evaluated by the FDA. Please consult a qualified healthcare professional before making any changes to your lifestyle or diet. By using this document, you agree to the complete terms on our website.

Why a Gut Health Checklist?

If you struggle with digestion, you are not alone. Whether you have bloating, constipation, loose stools, or reflux, these are challenges we help patients overcome every day.

While it's important to work with a practitioner to determine the cause of digestive distress, there are also several steps you can take on your own to support gut health.

This checklist gives you 9 actions you can take every day for healthy digestion. Read through the guide and then print the one-page checklist to use as a daily reminder.

Here's to better gut health!

The Essential Three

Water

Dehydration is one of the most common causes of constipation because water will move from the intestines into the blood flow when needed—leaving things dry inside the colon. Water keeps things moving through your intestines and helps to soften the stool. There can be several factors that determine your water needs, but a common starting point is to drink half your body weight in ounces.

Movement

Exercise helps to stimulate blood flow and keep the intestines moving. Exercise is also one of the most powerful ways to relieve stress, which can directly affect digestive function. Plus, there is a growing body of research showing that regular exercise has a beneficial effect on the composition of the gut microbiome! Consistency is key, so it's best to aim for a minimum of 30 minutes every day of dedicated exercise— like walking, jogging, biking, dancing, yoga.

Whole Foods

The foods you eat can have a dramatic effect on digestion. Fiber keeps the bowels regular and fuels the microbiome. One study found that higher fiber intake was associated with a lower risk of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)! The USDA recommends women consume 25 grams of fiber per day and men consume 38, but the amount that makes each person feel good will vary. Fiber-rich foods include fruits, vegetables, nuts, and whole grains. Fermented foods provide probiotics to further boost a healthy gut microbiome!

References

Clauss M, Gérard P, Mosca A, Leclerc M. Interplay Between Exercise and Gut Microbiome in the Context of Human Health and Performance. *Front Nutr*. 2021.

Hosseini Oskouie F, Vahedi H, Shahrbaf MA, Sadeghi A, Rashidkhani B, Hekmatdoost A. Dietary fiber and risk of irritable bowel syndrome: a case-control study. *Gastroenterol Hepatol Bed Bench*. 2018;11(Suppl 1):S20-S24.

The Gut-Brain Connection

Belly Breathing

Also called deep breathing or diaphragmatic breathing, belly breathing is a simple technique to both relieve stress and support healthy digestion. Focusing on the breath triggers the body to relax into a “rest and digest” state that we call a parasympathetic state. One study found belly breathing to reduce the frequency of acid reflux.

Mindful Eating

Mindful eating means intentionally placing your attention and awareness on the act of eating. No distractions or multi-tasking! Digestion happens when your body is in a parasympathetic state, meaning you are relaxed rather than stressed. When you slow down and focus on eating, it has a beneficial effect on digestion.

Thorough Chewing

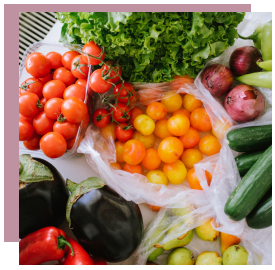
The process of digestion begins in the mouth. Chewing breaks down food so that it can be more easily digested in the stomach, while enzymes in the saliva begin the process of digesting carbohydrates. To support digestion, some recommend chewing each bite 30 times.

References

Cherpak CE. Mindful Eating: A Review Of How The Stress-Digestion-Mindfulness Triad May Modulate And Improve Gastrointestinal And Digestive Function. Integr Med (Encinitas). 2019;18(4):48-53.

Halland M, Bharucha AE, Crowell MD, Ravi K, Katzka DA. Effects of Diaphragmatic Breathing on the Pathophysiology and Treatment of Upright Gastroesophageal Reflux: A Randomized Controlled Trial. Am J Gastroenterol. 2021;116(1):86-94.

Gut-Friendly Foods



Rainbow of Colors

The wide array of colors in fresh fruits, vegetables, and other plant foods come from compounds called phytonutrients, which act as antioxidants and help to combat inflammation. New research shows that phytonutrients interact with the gut microbiota to support gut health. Try to eat as many colors as you can in a day!

Nuts for Snacks

Nuts are a convenient source of protein and healthy fats. Many provide essential omega-3 fatty acids that help to combat inflammation. One recent study showed that snacking on almonds boosted gut levels of butyrate, which is a key source of fuel for intestinal cells.

Fermented Foods

Fermented foods are a rich source of probiotics, which help to support the gut microbiome and digestive health. Some people do not feel good eating fermented foods, so be sure to talk with a practitioner if you are unsure. Fermented foods include yogurt, kefir, kombucha, kimchi, sauerkraut, and miso.

References

Creedon AC, Dimidi E, Hung ES, et al. The Impact of Almonds and Almond Processing On Gastrointestinal Physiology, Luminal Microbiology and Gastrointestinal Symptoms: a Randomized Controlled Trial and Mastication Study [published online ahead of print, 2022 Sep 20]. Am J Clin Nutr. 2022.

Kan J, Wu F, Wang F, et al. Phytonutrients: Sources, bioavailability, interaction with gut microbiota, and their impacts on human health. Front Nutr. 2022.

Everyday Gut Health Checklist

Gut health influences more than just digestion! Better gut health can translate to:

- More energy
- Better sleep
- Balanced mood
- Clearer mind
- And more!

Print this checklist to remember that everyday actions affect your gut health!

- [ ] Drink plenty of water, such as half your body weight in ounces.
- [ ] Move your body for a dedicated minimum of 30 minutes every day.
- [ ] Eat whole foods for their dietary fiber content.
- [ ] Set reminders to do deep belly breathing 3 times a day.
- [ ] Eat mindfully, without distractions or multitasking.
- [ ] Chew every bite thoroughly, such as 30 times per bite.
- [ ] Eat a rainbow of colors from fruits, vegetables, and other plant foods.
- [ ] Snack on nuts (as long as you are not allergic).
- [ ] Try fermented foods (talk with a practitioner if this makes you worse).

Take the Next Step!

I am committed to helping you achieve better gut health and digestive relief. Please explore more ways to work with me:

www.drruthannebaron.com