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Gut love

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Your gut is your entire digestive system. It starts at your mouth and ends at your bottom, and includes your esophagus, stomach, intestines and colon. It is in constant movement throughout the day, helping you chew, swallow, break down, process and expel your food; cool, right? This system effects everything in your body; gut-brain connection, hormones, skin health, hair health? you name it, I guarantee that there is a connection back to your gut. So, is it any wonder that when something is wrong in the body we look to the gut for more answers?

Your gut is made up of a menagerie of bacteria ? good and bad ? and it is where your health starts. Healthy gut = healthy you.

A lot of trendy articles and fast diets will have you believe that you must clean out your gut, or detox your body, or rid yourself of bacteria in order to regain control over your flora (you've heard that word before, right?). Well, what if I told you that if you eat the right foods and take care of yourself, your body will (in many cases, however, not the case if you have a parasite or severe bacterial overgrowth*) rebalance its own flora, naturally. Without any cleanses or detoxes. Amazing, right? Let's get into it.

Your gut microbiome (good bacteria) is something that you want to feed daily. These little guys are what keep your bad bacteria in check and act as security, so that the bad bacteria don't over-populate and run wild. More than anything, your microbiome loves fiber, especially a variety of fiber. Adding berries (raspberries and blackberries are highest in fiber), chia and flax seeds and legumes and lentils to your daily diet will significantly boost your fiber intake, and therefore boost the happiness, and efficacy, of your microbiome; protecting your gut health, and the health of your body and mind.

Focus on relaxation, engagement with your food and chewing. I cannot stress this enough. Enjoying your food, relaxing while you eat, engaging with your food (not watching tv, scrolling through Instagram or Facebook, or watching your favourite YouTube channel) and therefore spending the time to thoroughly chew your food, makes for a much better, healthier and happier digestive process. Digestion doesn't start when you eat, it actually starts before food even hits your lips. It starts when you look at/smell food.

Have you ever been cooking and felt your mouth start to salivate because the food smells so good? That's your body gearing up for digestion! Those juices in your mouth are beginning to stimulate your stomach to start gearing up for incoming food to breakdown. The more responsive we can make our stomach (ie. By sending clear signals that food is coming by being engaged with food), the more efficiently our stomach will process that food, and the easier it is to digest and eliminate without distress.

Switching out raw fruits and veggies for cooked can make a huge difference for your digestive health. Cooked fruits and veggies are much easier for our gut to process, and easier for our bacteria to enjoy, too. Contrary to popular belief, cooking these doesn't actually strip away any nutrients. Instead, roasting veggies and stewing fruits can break down hard to digest fibers that can cause digestive distress.

Lastly, listen to your body. All foods can be a part of a well-rounded, healthy diet, but if any food is causing you anxiety, pain or intolerance, it is important to remove it and dig deep to find the reason it's not working with your body.

Health is not a one-size-fits-all definition. Health is going to look and feel different for everyone. However, health will always feel good. So, it is important to recognise what is working for your body!