

FOOD TO HEAL • 006

# How to support a healthy gut microbiome

Nurture your gut microbiome and your health with our top diet and lifestyle tips

# What happens in the gut, doesn't just stay in the gut

The gut microbiome can produce substances that influence not only your gut health but also your nervous, metabolic and immune systems.

Our gut microbiome plays an crucial role in overall health, but supporting it doesn't have to feel overwhelming. Here, we break down simple, everyday steps you can take to help support this vital system.



# How to support a healthy microbiome

You can support your gut health by creating an environment where beneficial microbes thrive, and less helpful microbes are kept in balance..

## Diet and lifestyle for a healthy microbiome

The following diet and lifestyle recommendations can help support your gut health.

Before making changes, speak with your practitioner to ensure they align with your health goals and personalised treatment plan.



## Eat a variety of plants, mix it up as best you can!

The beneficial microbes in your gut rely on plant fibres for fuel. Eating a wider variety of plant foods helps support a healthy, diverse gut microbiome.

The key is to add more plants in (even small amounts), rather than cutting foods out. Eating the same foods daily can reduce gut microbe diversity over time.



## A diverse microbiome is associated with better health.

A diverse microbiome means having many different types of microbes (bacteria) living in your gut. A diverse microbiome is a healthy microbiome

# Aim to eat 30 or more plants each week.

Use the plant points tracker to help you keep count! Engage a fruit and vegetable box service, this is a great way to regularly get more variety delivered right to your home!

## ADDING HERBS AND SPICES

Sprinkle coriander onto your next curry. • Add some basil to your next pasta dish. • Pick some rosemary and add to roasted potatoes.

## SAME FRUIT OR VEGETABLE

Go for purple sweet potatoes over the orange variety. • Eat yellow capsicum over red or green.

## ADD LEGUMES TO YOUR MEALS

Add kidney beans to a chilli con carne • Eat hummus or falafel, • Add lentils to stews or soups.

## MIX A RANGE OF CUISINES

Plan meals inspired by different cuisines. • This can help you include a greater variety of vegetables each week.

## IMPROVE YOUR SMOOTHIE PLANT POWER

Include a new fruit or vegetable. • Add a small teaspoon of green banana flour to boost the resistant starch.

## CHANGE UP YOUR BREAD

Each week select a different bread or cracker to enjoy. • Rotate between dark rye, seeded bread or wholemeal varieties.

## BUY OR MAKE MIXED NUTS MIXTURE

Eat a small handful of mixed nuts as a snack or add to a bowl of oats.



# Fermented foods

Fermented foods, such as yoghurt, kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut, miso, and tempeh, are made using beneficial bacteria or yeast. They may help support gut microbiome diversity.

## Fermented boost

Add kimchi or sauerkraut to your plate for gut-friendly bacteria.



## Choose kombucha

Order kombucha instead of soft drink or wine when dining out for a gut-friendly option.



## Cook with tempeh

Tempeh is a fermented protein that works perfectly in stir-fries.



## Fermented foods support gut diversity

When not heat-treated, they contain live bacteria that may increase microbial diversity.



## Choose high-quality yoghurt or kefir

Look for options with the least number of added ingredients or making your own.



# Prebiotics

Prebiotics provide food for the beneficial microbes living in your gut. While we cannot digest prebiotics, certain beneficial microbes can. When microbes feed on prebiotics, they can produce compounds that are beneficial to your gut and overall health.

Here are a few easy ways to add more prebiotics to your day

## Cool your carbs

Let potatoes, rice or pasta cool before eating. Chilling increases resistant starch and supports gut health.

## Try oats or pearled barley

These grains are rich in beta-glucan — a gut-friendly fibre that helps feed your beneficial gut bacteria.

## Prebiotic vegetables to try

Include red onion, leek, asparagus, broccoli stalks and artichokes in your diet. Jerusalem artichokes are particularly high in FOS and inulin, great in soups, stews or salads.

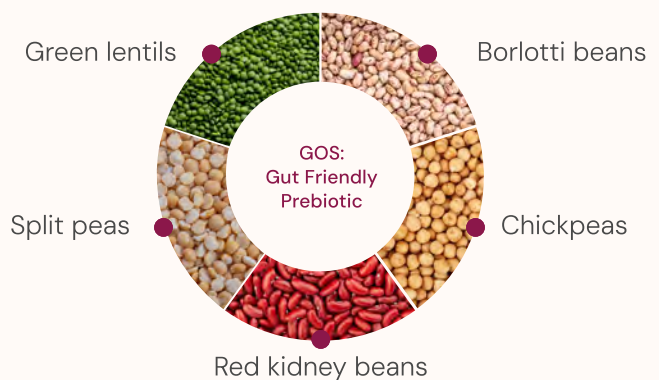


### Pearled barley

Is perfect in soups or salads and has a delicious mild nutty bite.

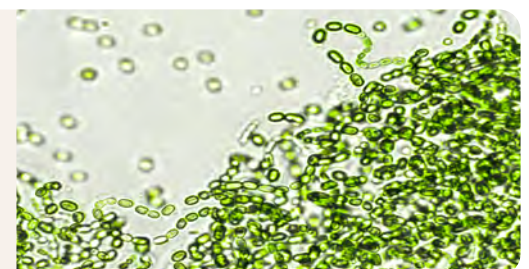
GOS (galacto-oligosaccharides) is a type of prebiotic fibre that helps feed beneficial gut bacteria.

Foods like these are naturally rich in GOS – a simple way to boost fibre and protein.



# Probiotics

Probiotics are live beneficial bacteria that support gut health. Different strains have different effects, so choosing the right one for your needs is important. Talk to your healthcare practitioner before starting a probiotic supplement.



# Sleep

Quality sleep is a foundation of good health. Research has found a positive link between gut microbiome diversity and sleep quality. Furthermore, poor sleep may contribute to an increase in gut microbes associated with poor health.

## Sleep & gut health

Regular, good-quality sleep helps keep your gut bacteria balanced. Aim for around 7–9 hours and a consistent sleep routine when possible.



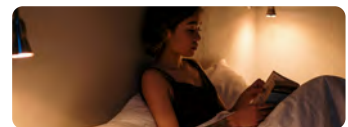
## Shift work & your body clock

Irregular hours can disrupt your circadian rhythm and gut balance. Support it by getting daylight when awake and keeping your sleep environment dark.



## Sleep environment

Keep your bedroom calm and sleep-focused. Limit screens and devices so your brain and gut can properly wind down.



## Support Better Sleep

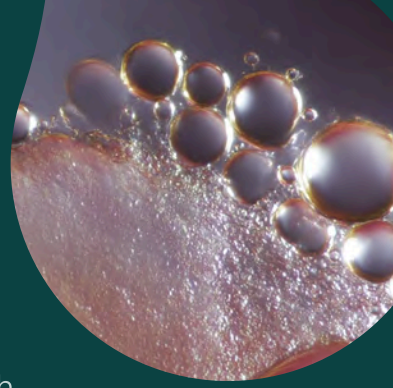
Exercise during the day can help with sleep at night. Reduce stimulating activities too close to your bedtime. Avoid eating heavy meals or sugary foods close to bedtime.



# Stress\*

People with higher stress levels often show differences in their gut microbiome. Stress can also affect how your gut functions, which may impact your overall health.

This is part of the gut–brain connection, where stress and gut health influence each other.



## Wind-down activities

Quiet activities like colouring can calm the mind, reduce stress and help you fall asleep more easily. Try a relaxing activity for about 20 minutes before bed.

## Mindfulness & meditation

Mindfulness helps regulate your stress response and supports healthier sleep and gut balance. Start with a short guided meditation if you're new to it.



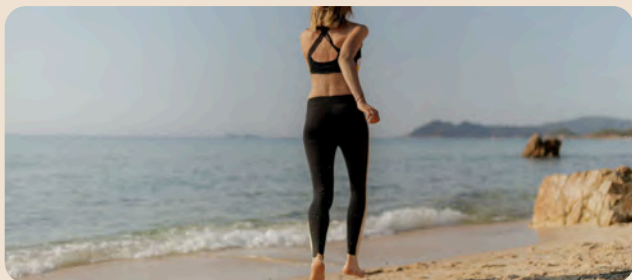
## Food & stress response

What you eat influences how your body handles stress. A fibre-rich, varied diet helps nourish the beneficial microbes in your gut.



## Gut-directed hypnotherapy

This therapy uses guided relaxation to improve communication between the gut and brain. It can help relieve IBS symptoms such as pain, bloating and nausea.



## Movement & Gut Health

Manage stress with daily exercise and movement. Exercise is also beneficial to the microbial community living in your gut.

\* If you are experiencing significant emotional difficulties, you should contact your GP for a referral to a qualified professional. BeyondBlue can also provide support to help you achieve your best possible mental health. BeyondBlue free support services can be reached at 1300 224 636.

# Nature time

Getting outside is good for more than fresh air. Time in nature can increase your exposure to helpful microbes, which may support a healthier, more diverse microbiome.



Get in the garden more and grow some of your own produce.



Try holidaying at farm stays or near forests.



Swim in the ocean or walk bare foot on the grass outside.



Go for more picnics in your local park or take a trip to the countryside.



## Get a pet

Living with furry friends may support a more diverse microbial environment within your home. For instance, the dust of homes with dogs showed different and rarer microbial species than those without dogs.

### Play with your pets.

They will love the extra human attention and your gut microbiome will be happy too.

### Take your dog for a walk

visit your local greenspace, park or an area with diverse vegetation.

### Support a local animal welfare charity

Foster dogs or other animals until they can be rehomed.



# How many plants can you eat this week?

Ready to boost your gut health?

Every different plant you eat this week earns you 1 point — from spinach to strawberries, lentils to linseeds, herbs to wholegrains. Your gut microbes will thank you.

Track your total and see how high you can go.

Can you reach 30–40 plants this week?

🌱 1	🌱 2	🌱 3	🌱 4	🌱 5	🌱 6	🌱 7	🌱 8
🌱 9	🌱 10	🌱 11	🌱 12	🌱 13	🌱 14	🌱 15	🌱 16
🌱 17	🌱 18	🌱 19	🌱 20	🌱 21	🌱 22	🌱 23	🌱 24
🌱 25	🌱 26	🌱 27	🌱 28	🌱 29	🌱 30	🌱 31	🌱 32
🌱 33	🌱 34	🌱 35	🌱 36	🌱 37	🌱 38	🌱 39	🌱 40



# Take the first step to understand your gut health

if you are interested in understanding more about your gut microbiome or how to test it visit:

[microba.com/patients](https://microba.com/patients)



