



How To Improve Your Gut Microbiome in A Day by Christiane Northrup

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By now you probably know how important your [gut health](#) is to your overall health. If not, you need to! 80 percent of your immune system is in your microbiome, your body's bacteria, which help your body with just about every process, including helping you to digest your food, think clearly and even maintain a healthy weight.

Your microbiome is housed in your gut and the other openings of your body such as your mouth, your genitals, and your nose. When your gut microbiome is balanced, you stay healthy, you are in a good mood and you have a lot of energy. When your gut microbiome is out of balance, you are setting yourself up for a host of health issues, including [weight gain](#), [diabetes](#), brain fog, and cancer.

Unfortunately, an unbalanced gut microbiome, or dysbiosis, is common today. Thanks to years of following diets high in processed foods and sugar, consuming conventionally raised meat and dairy products full of hormones, plus rounds of antibiotics, too many antacids and chronic stress, most of us have impaired gut health. I have also said for many years that our country's [C-section](#) rate and formula-feeding infants contribute to a dysbiotic state in children right from the start because babies need exposure to good bacteria in the birth canal and in breast milk to seed their guts. In fact, the allergies, autoimmunity, anxiety and depression that we see at increasing rates in children today are due, in part, to impaired gut health.

Your Genes Don't Matter, But Your Gut Microbiome's Genes Do!

As a society we have been quick to place the blame for everything from our weight to our moods on our genes. We say things like, "she can drink wine and eat chocolate every day and not gain weight because she is French." The truth is human beings all have similar DNA. So why is

it that some people are healthy when they consume chocolate every day while others maintain a strict Paleo diet and struggle with digestive symptoms or worse? It's because, unlike our genes, our microbiome's genes are vastly different.

The good news is that you can change your gut microbiome. You see, the average lifespan of a bacterium in your microbiome is 20 minutes! So you have the opportunity every time you eat to begin to change the population of your gut microbiome. This is good news because it means that rather than having to subscribe to theories, such as the Paleo diet, which assumes our genes evolve so slowly that we all need to eat like cavemen, we can begin to change our gut microbiome (and thus it's genes) one meal at a time, and even achieve a healthy gut very quickly.

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There are a number of factors that contribute to the health of your gut microbiome, including your environment, the amount of exercise and sleep you get, and of course, stress. But the number one factor that determines what microbes live in your gut (and which ones die off) is your diet.

In Functional Medicine, there is a very successful protocol called the 4Rs, which stands for Remove, Replace, Reinoculate, and Repair. There are many resources for learning more about the 4 R's. I like Raphael Kellman, M.D.'s book, [*The Microbiome Diet: The Scientifically Proven Way to Restore Your Gut Health and Achieve Permanent Weight Loss*](#). You can also listen to my interview with Dr. Kellman on my radio show, [Flourish](#).

The beautiful thing about the 4Rs protocol is that it doesn't have to be followed in order. Once you remove the processed foods and toxins from your diet, you can start doing all of the remaining 3 steps together. Unless you suffer from a serious digestive disorder or other condition, you can follow the 4Rs on your own. Or, find a practitioner who can tailor the protocol to your specific needs.

Here are my suggestions for following the 4Rs and improving your gut microbiome starting today:

1. **Eat the Right Foods.** Your gut microbiome responds to what you feed it. When you regularly eat a variety of healthy, non-processed foods, your microbiome becomes programmed to work for you. The more varied your diet, the more flexible your microbiome becomes, allowing for that occasional dessert.
 - a. **Remove the sugar and processed foods from your diet.** Refined carbohydrates, sugar and processed foods get absorbed quickly into your small intestine without any help from your microbes. That means your gut microbes stay hungry so they begin snacking on the cells that line your intestines, causing what we call Leaky Gut. Your intestinal lining is meant to be a strong barrier between your gut and the rest of your body. When your intestinal wall becomes leaky, particles of food enter your bloodstream, causing your immune system to attack them, and ultimately your own tissues. This leads to inflammation and whole cascade of conditions, including autoimmunity. Sugar also feeds organisms like Candida Albican, which also attacks your intestinal wall and can lead to a systemic Candida infection.

- b. **Get your carbohydrates from vegetables** and low-sugar fruits. Eating a lot of leafy green vegetables will help plant your gut with healthy and diverse bacteria. Dr. Kellman also recommends eating radishes, Jerusalem artichokes, leeks, jicama, asparagus, carrots, and, of course, garlic and turmeric. Be sure to get a balance of healthy fats and protein with each meal as well.
 - c. **Include fermented foods in your diet.** Fermented foods seed your gut with healthy bacteria. Eat sauerkraut, pickles, kimchi, kefir, yogurt (not processed), and kombucha. These foods are rich in prebiotics.
 - d. **Try a food elimination diet** to determine if you have any food allergies. Do you often have cramping, gas, or stomach pain after eating? You may have a food sensitivity or allergy. The most common food allergies or sensitivities are to cow's milk, soy, peanuts (nuts), corn, eggs and wheat (gluten). Some people find they feel even better if they eliminate all grains, including oats, quinoa, and spelt. But start with wheat at the very least. Do this for a few weeks and see if your symptoms improve. Also stay away from artificial sweeteners, alcohol, and coffee!
2. **Take a High-Quality [Probiotic](#).** Nearly everyone can benefit from supplementing with a good quality probiotic. Probiotics help maintain your gut's ecosystem as well as the ecosystem of your respiratory tract and urogenital tract. Also, try to limit your use of antibiotics. While they are necessary sometimes, and can be life-saving, most antibiotics are over-prescribed. Be sure to consult with your doctor about whether you, or your children, need an antibiotic, and always take your probiotics during treatment to re-seed your gut with healthy bacteria.
 3. **Support Your Digestion.** Unless you know you have high stomach acid, **stop taking antacids!** Many people have low stomach acid, but think they have too much and take antacids. Supplement with a digestive enzyme. This can help you digest your food better and get rid of your symptoms, such as gas, bloating and heartburn. Glutamine, an amino acid (a building block of protein), can also help to rebuild and maintain your digestive tract and support proper digestion. You may also want to try HCL if you know you have low stomach acid. Or, you could simply try drinking lemon and water, or 1 tbsp of apple cider vinegar in a little water before each meal to see if your symptoms improve.
 4. **Get In A Relaxed State.** One of the most important factors to healing your gut is your own consciousness. Your gut is your second brain. If your microbiome is out of balance, you may feel anxious, depressed, or tired. You may also suffer from memory problems or brain fog. In addition to eating the right foods, try to get into a meditative state prior to eating. Do this by removing all stressors, including stressful people and conversations. If you are eating with others, try not to speak excessively, or talk about negative subjects. Every time you sit down to eat, take a deep breath, pause and give thanks to all of the plants, animals and people who helped create your food, including God, then consecrate the energy you will get from your food to a good cause, or to someone you love. This activity can help transform even unhealthy fast food.

Like everything else, there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to your microbiome. You may be a strict vegetarian, eat the Paleo way or fall somewhere in between. The key is to keep supporting your microbiome with the foods that are healthy for you.

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