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Your Gut Knows ...

Did you ever wonder why you get “queasy” or “butterflies” in your stomach when you are nervous? Did you ever wonder why your whole body hurts or swells up when you eat or drink something that is foreign to your body? The digestive system does much more than just digest food, it has a direct connection to our brain that affects our mood and emotions, and is also at the center of building a health immune system.



With regard to mood and emotion, 90% of our serotonin is made in the digestive system. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter, often called our “feel good” brain chemical, which has a direct impact on our mood and how we sleep. Serotonin can also affect our digestive function, appetite, our memory and how we manage stress. The gastrointestinal tract is sensitive to emotion. Anger, anxiety, sadness, elation — all of these feelings (and others) can trigger symptoms in the gut. Psychosocial factors influence the actual physiology of the gut, as well as symptoms. In other words, stress (or depression or other psychological factors) can affect movement and contractions of the GI tract, make inflammation worse, or perhaps make you more susceptible to infection. This leads me to the next point – the gut is the chief developer and supporter of the immune system.

Healthy gut microbiota is important for our well-being. Microbiota is defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary as the microscopic organisms of a particular environment. To remain healthy, we need both good and bad bacteria in our gut, a diverse set of microbiomes. Since balance of bacteria in our gut influences the balance of our immune system, an unbalanced bacterial flora with, for instance, too many opportunistic pathogens can shift the immune system to an increased inflammatory state with a so-called "leaky gut". This inflammatory state may then affect other body systems and increase the risk of obesity, type 1 and type 2 diabetes, and even depression. It is not so easy to permanently change an established gut flora, good or bad. Once disturbed, the flora will return to normal within a short time frame, however, an imbalanced gut is able to loop in a bad cycle, whereby harmful functions are reinforced. A diverse microbiota is more likely to bounce back from unhealthy fluctuations in diet and withstand outside intruders, and this means a much more tolerant and well-regulated immune system.

So it is important to listen to your “gut feelings”. Your body will tell you if things are right or not. It is important to eat a healthy, balance diet, low in processed foods and bad fats (versus healthy fats); get exercise; get good sleep, and basically just stay in tune with yourself mentally and physically. If something doesn’t feel right in your gut, and it is persistent, it wouldn’t hurt to check in with a medical professional to see why your body is not “in sync”. The gut-brain connection is real – pay attention.

The following website was sourced and referenced for this article:

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/the-gut-brain-connection>

<https://www.agespace.org/digestive-system-can-affect-mood>

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-03-gut-bacteria-essential-healthy-immune.html> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/microbiota>



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