

Ten things that can disrupt a healthy stomach



The gut is both strong and delicate at the same time. We're learning more about positive lifestyle choices and those that can weaken the gut's defenses. Here are ten things in your environment or lifestyle choices that might affect how well your gut performs:

1. Maintain a healthy weight. In obese people, the gut microbiome is less diverse.¹
2. Reduce your consumption of sugar, artificial preservatives, and processed foods.¹
3. Eat less red meat and high-fat foods.²
4. Use an appropriate amount of hand sanitizer.³ Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water rather than using hand sanitizers, when possible.⁴
5. Moderate the use of over-the-counter painkillers for aches and pains. Recent research reveals that some of the most commonly taken painkillers can have dramatic negative effects on the gut's microbiome. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), ibuprofen for example, can adversely impact gut bacteria in a fashion similar to antibiotics.^{5,6}
6. Use natural alternatives to harsh chemicals for lighter cleaning jobs (such as vinegar or lemon juice).⁷
7. Studies recommend not to overuse antibiotics (research has shown that it can take up to a year for some gut bacteria to recover from a course of antibiotics).^{1,2}
8. Don't smoke! Smoking isn't just bad for your lungs and heart; it can affect the healthy balance of microorganisms in your gut.⁸
9. Avoid stress. Prolonged stress can alter the balance of bacteria that live in your intestines, leading to immune system problems. This can contribute to Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), which can cause cramping, abdominal pain, bloating, gas, diarrhea, and constipation.²
10. Don't lose sleep. A number of gastrointestinal functions are regulated by circadian rhythms (also known as your sleep/wake cycle or body clock). These functions include gastric acid production and small intestinal nutrient absorption.⁹

Strengthen your gut by participating in *The Gutsy Challenge* and get started <for your chance to win>! <Visit [XX](#) to pick up your copy of the challenge materials.>

¹BMJ, "Role of the gut microbiota in nutrition and health," June 2018

²Healthline, "Why the gut microbiome is crucial for your health," June 2017

³Livestrong.com, "How bad is it really to use hand sanitizer all the time?" August 2020

⁴Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), How to Protect Yourself and Others," June 2020

⁵University of Ottawa, "Everyday drugs act in surprising ways on the microbiome." September 2020

⁶Always consult a physician before changing medicine intake.

⁷Journal of Diabetes & Metabolic Disorders, "The most important challenges ahead of microbiome pattern in the post era of the COVID-19 pandemic," July 2020

⁸Journal of Clinical Medicine, "Association between cigarette smoking status and composition of gut microbiota: Population-based cross-sectional study," September 2018

⁹Psychology Today, "How Your Stomach Could Be Impacting Your Sleep," November 2018

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