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DR MEGAN ROSSI

The **Gut Health Doctor**

10 Steps to Good Gut Health

My top tips for
good gut health, plus
3 gut-loving recipes
to get you started!

Welcome to your gut health journey!



Hey! I'm Megan, a registered dietitian, nutritionist and research fellow with a PhD in gut health, investigating all things gut health and nutrition.

I'm so happy you're taking the first steps to unlock the power of your own gut health with this 10-step guide!

Gut health is trending and it's now one of our top global health concerns. Sadly, with that comes a lot of misinformation and misleading messages.

It's time to get the truth about the gut out in the open so you can take control of your health from the inside out!

At The Gut Health Doctor, we're here to inspire and empower everyone to enjoy good gut health, by sharing fad-free information and trusted advice that's easy to digest and backed up by credible science.

The Gut Health Doctor

Feeding you the latest fad-free health & nutrition news.
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Boosting your gut health is key to transforming your overall health and wellbeing.

The gut. A simple yet powerful word that's essential to pretty much whatever your health goal is. Good gut health is linked to everything from supporting your immunity, better heart and skin health, to better mood and, of course, combatting niggling gut symptoms.

Say hello to your gut microbiota - or as I like to call, your GM. The wonderfully complex community of trillions of microbes that live, work and party in your digestive tract.

It might sound pretty heavy and scientific, but I'll let you in on something...

Despite all the myths and false claims, from dangerous 'detox' diets to risky colon cleanses, taking control of your gut health and mastering the basics of a healthy, happy gut is generally pretty straightforward!

No expensive supplements, no magix fixes and definitely no restrictive diets. Looking after your gut health does NOT mean complicated or boring food - it's all about what you add in. Think INclusion, not EXclusion.

And with serious health gains up for grabs, the potential for transformation is huge...

Here, I'm breaking down my ten top tips for a happy and healthy gut, so you can discover its true power and potential - no PhD required.

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10 Steps to Good Gut Health

1. Fill up on fibre

In a world obsessed with protein, I am here to fly the flag of fibre as the Holy Grail of nutrients. Why?

Fibre is your GM's favourite food - think of it as Mother Nature's gift to your gut. In turn, keeping your gut microbes well-fed and happy will also benefit just about every organ in your body, including your heart, mind and skin health.

Where do you get it? All your plant-based food groups: fruit, vegetables, wholegrains, legumes (beans and pulses), nuts and seeds.

How much do you need? Most guidelines recommend getting 30g of fibre a day, but most of us are getting less than 20g. I'd argue we should punch even higher if you can - the more the merrier! When you're increasing, go slow and steady - and make sure you're staying hydrated to help the fibre work its microbial magic.

A few examples: 1/2 cup of tinned chickpeas gives you 5g fibre, a pear contains 5g, a medium baked sweet potato (skin on) has 6g, and 1/2 cup of oats is 4g.



2. Switch up your shopping basket

When it comes to a gut-loving diet, diversity is key.

How diverse is diverse? I recommend aiming for 30 plant points - that's 30 different plant-based foods across all your plant-based food groups - on your plate every week.

With each meal, think about how you can mix it up to hit your goals - simple supermarket swaps make a big difference!

Sprinkle mixed seeds and nut butter onto your morning porridge along with your apple and cinnamon, go for the mixed stir-fry pack instead of just broccoli, grab all the colours of peppers instead of just the red, experiment with new wholegrains (ever tried freekeh?) and add some tinned mixed beans to your pasta sauce. Check out my [book](#) for more diversity tips.

Avoid the perils of the food rut and switch between different plants, week-on-week. Kids love choosing their own new food item every week too!

3. Invite every food group to your plate

From low-carb to grain-free, the past few years have seen diets that eliminate entire food groups gain cult status. The Paleo brigade might sound convincing, but...

Inclusion, rather than EXclusion, is the aim of the game for a happy gut.

If you want to maximise the diversity of your GM (which is linked to better overall health and wellbeing), swerve restrictive eating patterns, enjoy your grains and remember: fibre is a type of carb - see point one for why that matters!

You don't have to completely avoid your favourite treats or go fully vegan for good gut health either - it's much more about what you add in than what you cut out.

Side note: if you've been advised to try the low-FODMAP diet for IBS, note this should only be done with the help of a trained pro - and reintroducing FODMAP foods is super important! For those struggling to get access to FODMAP-trained dietitians, I hear you - and that's exactly why I've created a FODMAP-lite approach, allowing you to get started on your own without the complexity and risks of the full-blown diet. Find all the details and a step-by-step guide in my [book](#).

4. Maximise your shut eye

Just like you, your GM has a circadian rhythm.

This means disturbed sleep can throw off its natural cycle, much as it can yours (ever spent the day in a haze after catching an extra few episodes on Netflix at 11pm?).

It doesn't take much – in fact, just two days of poor slumber can negatively impact your gut health.

To maintain your equilibrium, try to get 7-9 hours of sleep every night - and if you can wake up and go to sleep at around the same time (give or take 30 minutes), your GM will love you for it.

It might be worth checking in on your sleep hygiene too. Keep a dark, quiet and cool bedroom, stay away from glowing screens in the hours before bed and swerve caffeine after 3pm. More on that in my [book](#).



5. Stress less

We all get a little stressed from time to time - but our bodies aren't designed to be constantly on-the-go. If your stress levels are through the roof, chances are your gut health is paying the price.

That's why nailing relaxation techniques is vital, for a heap of reasons – including your gut and mental health.

The link between stress levels and a happy GM is clear - it's all down to the gut-brain connection.

Our brain has a big impact on our gut. Several trials show that non-diet approaches designed to target the gut-brain axis, including breathing exercises, hypnotherapy and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can improve IBS symptoms to the same degree as following a low-FODMAP diet. Pretty impressive, right?



6. Move your body

You've heard a zillion reasons to exercise regularly before, but allow me to throw a fresh one into the mix.

As well as helping with issues like constipation, moving your body is linked to having a more diverse GM.

And a more diverse GM has more 'skills' to look after us - from balancing our blood sugar to preventing many diseases.

Get your heart rate up for at least 30 minutes most days, whether it's running, HIIT, yoga, dancing or whatever you like best, and reap the gastrointestinal benefits.



7. Get funky with fermenting

Give fermented foods, from fizzy kombucha (made from tea) to spicy Korean kimchi (a cabbage side dish) and Japanese natto (sticky soybeans) a place at your dinner table - even for the taste alone.

Traditional fermented foods are associated with a whole host of potential benefits, lowering blood pressure, supporting our immunity and having a calming effect

Anything with live microbes fits the fermented food bill. While results from robust human trials are limited, dairy kefir (fermented milk) tops my list of fermented items, with decent evidence for the health benefits across heart health, bone health, digestion and weight management.

Without over-claiming the science (that still needs to catch up), at the very least fermented foods bring a whole other level of flavour to your plate and are a great way to engage with our microbial world.



8. Fall in love with EVOO

Extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) is hands down the winning oil. Cook with it (yep, the good quality stuff can handle the heat of home cooking up to 190°C/375°F), drizzle it on your salads and dip with freshly baked bread.

Just as the liquid olivey-goodness can benefit your brain and heart health, it gives your GM some love, too.

It's loaded with beneficial plant chemicals and several studies show the wide-ranging health benefits.

Want to ensure you're getting the minimally processed real deal? Look out for the LOT number and harvest date on the bottle.

9. Cut down on unnecessary meds

Antibiotics are life-saving, but, unless your doctor insists you need them, they're best avoided.

Research shows that a course of antibiotics can wipe out many of your good bacteria, as well as the bad stuff they're trying to nix - with potentially big implications for your GM long-term, especially with repeat prescriptions. Other medications can impact our gut microbes too.

Choose lifestyle tweaks rather than a prescription, where possible.

If you can work on your sleep quality instead of taking sleeping pills - or dial down your alcohol intake, as opposed to taking reflux meds - great.

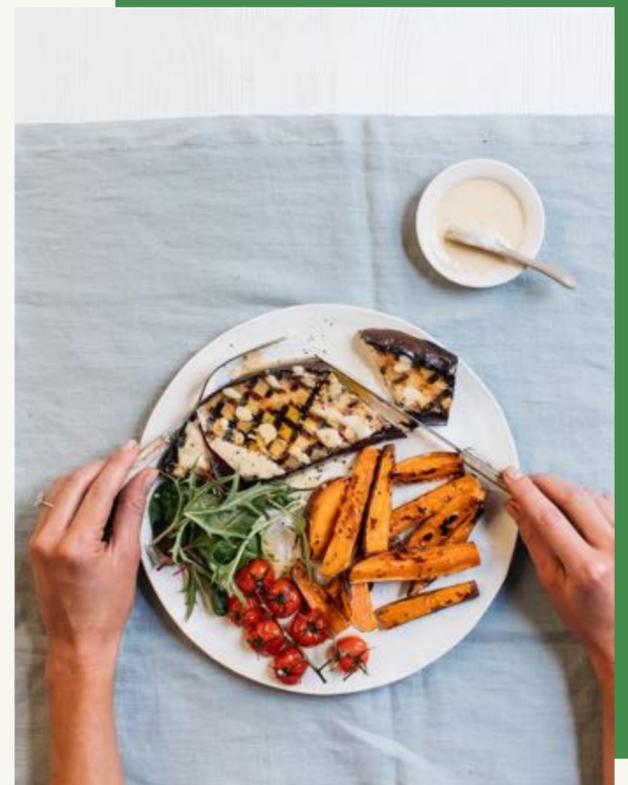
Full disclosure: speak to your GP or PCP before coming off any medication!

10. Go easy on the alcohol and additives

Food additives, including artificial sweeteners and emulsifiers found in lots of processed foods and drinks, have been implicated in negatively impacting the GM in animal studies. And even though yes, we humans are far from mice, while the jury is still out about their impact on our GM, best to limit these where you can.

Large quantities of booze can make our gut 'leaky' (albeit temporarily).

A little red wine here and there is no bad thing (our microbes do enjoy the plant chemicals found in red wine), but it's worth being sensible with alcohol (no more than two standard drinks a day).



Gut-Loving Recipes

Buckwheat Bircher with Sliced Apple & Blueberries

ingredients

Serves 2

- ½ cup buckwheat groats
- ½ cup rolled oats
- 3 tbsp chia seeds
- ½ cup live yoghurt or coconut yoghurt
- 1 cup milk of choice
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- cardamom pods, crushed (optional)
- 2 tsp date paste

To top:

- ½ cup frozen blueberries
- 2 tbsp date paste
- Squeeze of lemon juice
- 1 apple, grated or sliced
- 2 tbsp mixed seeds
- 1 tbsp nut butter



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PLANT POINTS

method

1. First, make the blueberry compote. Add 60g frozen blueberries to a pan with 2 tsp date paste and a squeeze of lemon juice. Let it gently simmer for about 5 minutes until the blueberries have softened.
2. Add your buckwheat to a pan and cover with water, then allow to simmer for about 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until all of the water has been absorbed. Once cooked, strain the buckwheat, running it through cold water and allow to cool.
3. Once cool, add the buckwheat to bowls or jars and stir through the rest of the ingredients. Leave in the fridge overnight. If you have time in the morning, add your toppings then - or simply add your compote, apple, seeds, nut butter and any other toppings before you pop in the fridge.



Smoky Walnut Tacos

ingredients

Serves 4

For the walnut 'meat':

- 50g sun-dried tomatoes
- 240g raw walnuts
- 60g mushrooms, finely diced
- 60g aubergine, finely diced
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- ½ tsp sea salt
- ½ tbsp smoked paprika
- ½ tbsp ground cumin
- 2 tsp chili powder
- 2 tsp nutritional yeast
- 1½ tbsp extra virgin olive oil

To serve:

- Wholewheat tortillas
- 1 bunch of fresh coriander
- 1 avocado
- 4 radishes
- 1/2 tin of black beans



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PLANT POINTS



method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C / 350°F
2. Add the walnuts to a food processor and pulse into a semi-fine meal (some larger chunks are ok, be careful not to churn into a butter). Remove from the processor and leave to the side.
3. Add the sundried tomatoes, garlic, sea salt, smoked paprika, cumin, chili powder and nutritional yeast (optional) into the empty food processor and blend. Add 1 tbsp of extra virgin olive oil slowly, to thicken the mix.
4. Stir the spice mix and ¼ cup of water into the walnut mixture.
5. Transfer to the greased baking sheet.
6. Dice the mushrooms and the aubergine and mix into the walnut meat on the tray, drizzle over the last ½ tbsp of EVOO, and a pinch of salt and pepper.
7. Bake for 15 minutes at 180°C / 350°F, stirring halfway through to prevent over-browning.
8. Build your tacos, and enjoy! Leftovers can be stored up to 5-7 days in the refrigerator or up to 1 month in the freezer.

Chia Jam Tarts

ingredients

For the pastry

- ¾ cup raw almonds
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil (plus a little extra for oiling the tins)
- 3 tbsp date paste
- ½ cup oat flour
- 1 cup rolled oats

Chia Jam

- 270g frozen raspberries
- 1 Medjool date, chopped
- 2½ tbsp chia seeds



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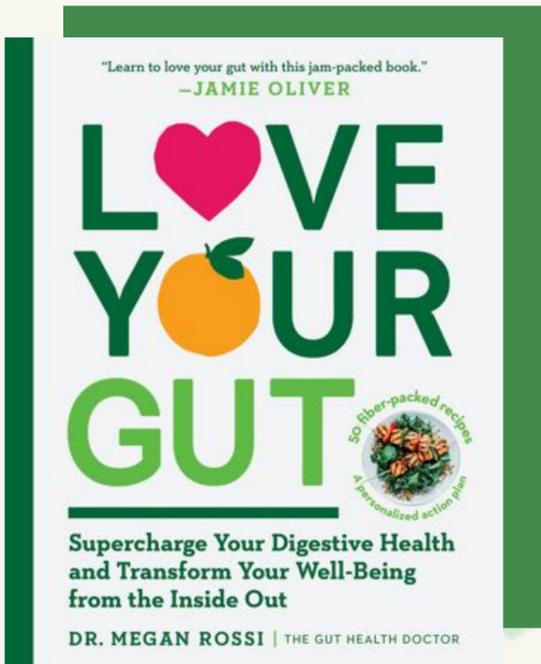
PLANT POINTS



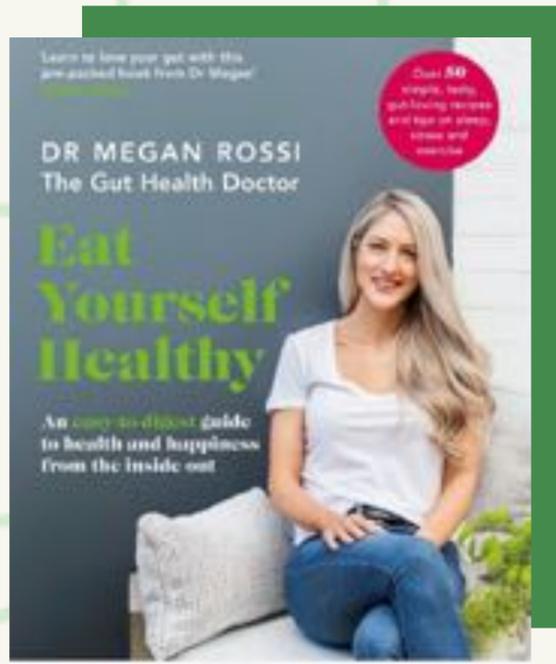
method

1. Preheat oven to 180°C / 350°F
2. Blitz the almonds in a food processor into a fine crumb.
3. Add all remaining ingredients to the food processor, apart from the rolled oats, and pulse on high until all ingredients are combined.
4. Next, add the rolled oats and pulse until combined, while the mixture still has a bit of texture. It should be a little bit crumbly, but be easily moldable.
5. Divide the mixture into 6 equal servings, lightly oil the tartlet tins then press the mixture into each tin and mould into shape.
6. Place in the centre of the preheated oven for 12-15 minutes until fully cooked and golden.
7. Meanwhile, make the chia jam. Put the raspberries into a small saucepan, then add the chopped date and 1/2 cup of water. Bring to a gentle simmer (don't boil). Using the back of a spatula, squish the raspberries and chopped dates, then simmer for 10 minutes. Stir in the chia seeds and continue to simmer until the mixture starts to thicken (2-3 minutes). Take off the heat and let it cool.
8. When the pastry is cooked, remove from the oven and set aside until cool. Remove from the tray, then spoon the set jam into the pastry.

Your next steps...



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