

Supercharging Your Well-Being for Vibrant Health and Harmony

I'm going to make a bold statement. Every day I see patients who are grappling with various symptoms, and I firmly believe that every one of them would likely see improvement if they took action to restore their gut health and adopted a diet rich in gut-friendly elements such as fiber, probiotics, prebiotics and polyphenols. The majority of symptoms would probably go away, usually carrying with them any underlying sicknesses and diseases.

Download PDF

```
[responsivevoice_button voice="US English Male" buttontext="Listen to this Feature" buttoncolor:"blue"]
```

That's how powerful the gut is. Once it's revitalized, it can potentially harmonize the rest of your body! If your focus is on enhancing your gut health, here are five "gut power tools," tried and true methods known to be profoundly beneficial for your gut.

Beyond The Article With Dr. Don Colbert

Gut Power Tool 1: Fiber

The first gut power tool is none other than good old fiber—not the kind derived from beans, wheat bran or grains laden with lectins, but rather psyllium husk powder. Although it might not seem exciting or cool, it takes center stage in the restoration of your gut health.

Few people get enough fiber in their diets. Scarcely any of my patients consistently meet their fiber needs, and a mere 5% of

Americans fulfill the requirements for adequate fiber intake. Therefore, it's common to see patients with low-fiber symptoms such as constipation, inability to lose weight, low energy, hunger soon after eating and craving between meals.

Of course, you can't blame everything on fiber, as it's merely a single component within the intricate puzzle of a healthy gut. But consuming the right sources of fiber in the right amounts can potentially reset your gut health and may also help control blood sugar levels; lower blood pressure and cholesterol; make you feel full longer, causing you to reduce food intake and lose weight; normalize bowel movements; lower risk of heart disease; minimize hemorrhoids; and help prevent diverticular disease.

More to Know About Fiber

Constipation is terrible news for your gut. To stop being constipated, taking one teaspoon to one heaping teaspoon of psyllium husk powder after breakfast and/or dinner will usually do the trick if you are drinking enough water (at least eight cups per day). Eventually, aim for 25–35 grams a day, and you can't go wrong. Add that to sufficient water intake, and you will often begin to see the magic of fiber after a week or two.

We all need fiber, but if you suffer from IBS, small intestinal fungal overgrowth (SIFO), SIBO, or IBD, then fiber may cause bloating and gas. If you have colitis or Crohn's disease, fiber may cause a flare-up. What is the answer? Some doctors recommend avoiding fiber altogether until the patient's ailment, such as SIBO, is under control. Your gut needs the many benefits of fiber, but if it takes you a while to get there, that is fine.

Gut Power Tool 2: Probiotics

The second gut power tool is probiotics. Probiotics are live micro-organisms, typically bacteria or yeast, that offer

potential health benefits when consumed in adequate amounts. Found in certain food and supplements, these beneficial microorganisms aim to support the balance of gut bacteria and promote overall digestive and immune health.

You can take probiotics as supplements in liquid, pill or powder form, but probiotics are also found in fermented food such as kefir, kimchi, kombucha, miso, natto, pickles, sauerkraut, tempeh, traditional buttermilk and yogurt. Dairy is harmful and inflammatory to many of my patients' GI tracts. If lactose intolerance is a concern, or you are sensitive to dairy, opt for coconut kefir or coconut yogurt, or goat or sheep yogurt or kefir. Regardless of your preference, you have an abundance of options that are full of probiotics and extremely healthy for your gut.

Common Probiotics

Here are the gut-friendly probiotics that are readily available in food or supplements.

1. *Lactobacillus acidophilus*: helps decrease bad bacteria growth, helps maintain gut bacteria balance, helps reduce yeast infections
2. *Lactobacillus brevis*: helps reduce lipopolysaccharide (LPS), strengthens gut wall, improves immune function
3. *Lactobacillus casei*: helps heal infectious diarrhea
4. *Lactobacillus gasseri*: helps treat *H. pylori*
5. *Lactobacillus plantarum*: helps heal infectious diarrhea, helps decrease inflammation, helps maintain gut bacteria balance
6. *Lactobacillus rhamnosus*: helps prevent diarrhea
7. *Lactobacillus salivarius*: helps reduce gas
8. *Streptococcus thermophilus*: helps digest lactose
9. *Bifidobacterium bifidum*: is beneficial for the immune system
10. *Bifidobacterium infantis*: helps with IBS

11. *Bifidobacterium longum*: helps prevent diarrhea and constipation, helps improve lactose tolerance
12. *Bifidobacterium lactis*: helps decrease bloating, strengthens gut wall, helps boost immunity
13. *Saccharomyces boulardii*: helps heal infectious diarrhea

Thousands of species of bacteria live in the world and in your gut—many of them good and beneficial. Probiotics crowd out the bad bacteria in your gut and stop them from colonizing. This minimizes ongoing damage to your gut while increasing the number of good bacteria. The good bacteria then have room to grow and multiply, bringing healing to your gut and body.

But probiotics are something that you continually need to eat or take as supplements. One glass of goat milk kefir or one helping of sauerkraut is good for your gut, but just as with fiber, you need a daily intake of probiotics for your gut health.

As you work to include probiotics in your diet daily, keep in mind that it is good to shake things up a bit. Rotating probiotics after three to six months is recommended to keep your gut's microbiome diverse and healthy. The more you do this naturally with the food you eat, the happier your gut will be.

Probiotics help repair the gut lining, which immediately decreases inflammation. When the inflammation subsides, the symptoms usually disappear. This also typically helps reduce every related risk of disease. For most people, eating food with probiotics or taking probiotic supplements is more than sufficient. Probiotics may help boost one's immune system and protect one against infections. Statistics show that probiotics help train our immune system.

Gut Power Tool 3: Prebiotics

The third gut power tool is prebiotics. Like probiotics,

prebiotics are incredibly beneficial to your gut's microbiome and your entire GI tract. Prebiotics are a type of dietary fiber that serve as nourishment for beneficial gut bacteria. They are nondigestible compounds found in certain food, particularly plant-based sources such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes. By providing a supportive environment for good bacteria to flourish, prebiotics indirectly promote gut health and overall well-being. Though prebiotics are available in supplement form, the most common way to get prebiotics is through the food we eat.

Using Prebiotics to Help Your Gut

Achieving gut health involves supplying your gut with the necessary nutrients once bloating and gas have been managed. This entails incorporating prebiotics, as these compounds fuel beneficial bacteria, enabling them to proliferate and contribute to holistic well-being.

Within our gut reside two primary types of microbes—Firmicutes and Bacteroidetes. Although it's crucial to maintain Firmicutes for the health of the gastrointestinal tract, overpopulation beyond Bacteroidetes usually results in weight gain. Conversely, when Bacteroidetes dominate, weight loss and a leaner profile typically follow suit. A diet laden with sugar, carbs and starches but low in fiber tends to favor Firmicutes growth, correlating with weight gain. Conversely, a Healthy Gut Zone diet, rich in fiber and prebiotics while low in sugar, carbs and starches, promotes the dominance of Bacteroidetes and facilitates weight loss.

An added benefit of prebiotics is their role in generating butyrate, a short-chain fatty acid that holds significant benefits for your gut. Butyrate not only serves as fuel for colon cells but also exhibits anti-inflammatory properties. This reduction in inflammation can be transformative for many individuals, altering the course of their health. Butyrate also supports the immune system and safeguards against

specific digestive tract ailments. The more butyrate in your gut, the better off you will be.

Gut Power Tool 4: Polyphenols

Polyphenols are a class of naturally occurring compounds found in various plant-based food. They are known for their potent antioxidant properties, which contribute to their potential health benefits. Polyphenols are abundant in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, tea and certain beverages such as red wine and coffee. Consuming food rich in polyphenols has been linked to various health advantages, including reduced inflammation, improved heart health and enhanced gut function. Polyphenols are natural antioxidant compounds that protect us from toxins, prevent blood clots, promote gut health, reduce cell damage and more.

Olive Oil's Best-kept Secret: Oleocanthal

For me, extra-virgin olive oil is the primary source of polyphenols, as it makes the perfect salad dressing and can be drizzled over most cooked food and added to soup.

One of the many phenolic compounds is oleocanthal, one of the most powerful phytonutrients in the world. Because oleocanthal is so good for you, it has been highly investigated and researched. It was discovered in 1993, defined in 2005, and found (among many other things) to be like liquid ibuprofen. This oleocanthal is more active than many medications, and it is an anti-inflammatory and a pain reliever. It's also 100% natural, which means you get the ibuprofen benefit without any of the side effects.

Interestingly, the only known source for this special oleocanthal polyphenol is extra-virgin olive oil. It is found nowhere else. Oleocanthal is found in the highest concentrations in extra-virgin olive oil from certain locations in Greece.

Gut Power Tool 5: Resistant Starches

The fifth and final gut power tool is resistant starches. Resistant starches are a type of dietary carbohydrate that resists digestion in the small intestine and reaches the large intestine mostly unchanged. This unique characteristic allows them to serve as a source of nourishment for beneficial gut bacteria, promoting their growth and activity. Resistant starches are found in food such as undercooked potatoes, green bananas, legumes and some whole grains. They offer several potential health benefits, including improved gut health, enhanced insulin sensitivity and better blood sugar control.

Not every carb is a resistant starch. In fact, decreasing your carb intake to lower sugars is a necessary part of giving your gut time to heal. The bad bacteria thrive in a sugar-rich environment, while the good bacteria need a low-sugar environment to thrive.

So where do you find these resistant starches? Familiar food sources include sweet potatoes, yams, green (not fully ripened) bananas, green mangos, green papaya and green plantains. When the fruit is fully ripened, both the sugar/fructose content and lectin content are high. Eating the green fruit bypasses the sugar/fructose and lectins and provides you with a great source of resistant starches. These fruits are good for your gut, but only when they are green. Sliced in bite-size pieces, they are a great topping on salads.

Stewarding Your Good Health and Wholeness

If you've ever felt overwhelmed by the flood of health advice, unsure of where to turn amid the countless theories and trends, rest assured that you're not alone. The world of health is vast and complex, but I'm here to simplify it for you, to lead you into the health zone essentials of well-being where clarity, balance and vibrancy thrive.

Over the years, I've dedicated my medical practice to offering not just solutions but a road map to true health. I've sought to empower you with knowledge and wisdom, to help you take charge of your well-being in a world brimming with noise. Let me assure you, health isn't a collection of isolated fragments. It's a symphony of interconnected systems working together in harmony.

Don Colbert, MD, has been a board-certified family practice doctor for over 25 years in Orlando, Florida, and most recently in Dallas, Texas. He is also board-certified in anti-aging medicine through the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine. He is the author of several books including three New York Times bestsellers: Dr. Colbert's Keto Zone Diet, The Seven Pillars of Health and Dr. Colbert's "I Can Do This" Diet. His newest book is Dr. Colbert's Health Zone Essentials.