

## Supporting a happy and healthy gut for a happy and healthy you

- Before each meal take time to breathe to come into a parasympathetic state (i.e. not stressed). Eat in a relaxed manner, taking time out to enjoy your food and chew your food properly as this will aid good digestion.

- Regular practice of yoga, mindfulness and meditation lower the stress response and divert energy into our parasympathetic nervous system to support digestion.

- Reduce or avoid processed foods, alcohol & carbohydrates particularly refined carbohydrates (white bread, white rice and white pasta) as these can feed harmful bacteria and irritate the gut lining so can have a negative impact on the production of digestive juices.

- Boosting the friendly bacteria keeps the levels of harmful bacteria down, supports digestion and the immune system, aids healthy bowel movements, provides B vitamins and fatty acids for energy, have anti-inflammatory effects, support our liver and neurotransmitter production for brain health and a balanced mood.

- Fermented foods such as organic miso (Clear Spring), tamari (Clear Spring), kombucha (Go Kombucha), pickles, sauerkraut (Raw Health Brand), coconut kefir (Rhythm) and live coconut yoghurt (Coyo) contain beneficial bacteria. To be of benefit they need to be consumed regularly e.g. at least once a day. Different fermented foods contain different strains of bacteria so try to eat a variety.

- Eat non-irritating fibre rich foods such as chia, quinoa buckwheat, berries, vegetables and pulses. This will increase the transit time of foods, encouraging healthy bowel movements. A tablespoon of whole flaxseed (also known as linseeds) soaked in a glass of water and drunk either at night and / or in the morning can aid constipation.



**Try to eat prebiotics foods every day.**

Prebiotics are fibrous food ingredients, which reach the colon without being digested or absorbed, and are fermented by beneficial bacteria. This stimulates the growth and activity of these bacteria, so they serve as fuel for friendly bacteria and therefore promote the maintenance of a healthy gut microflora.

These include the onion family (e.g. garlic, onions, leeks etc)  
Oats (if not intolerant)  
Artichokes  
Salsify  
Chicory  
Asparagus  
Bananas (although these may not be suitable if on an anti-candida diet)

**Did you know there are more microbial cells in our intestines than there are cells in an entire human body? There are 400 different known species and 80% of the dry weight of faecal matter is bacteria!**

- Magnesium is the magic mineral we could all do with more of. It helps relax the mind and the body but also gives us energy. Magnesium rich foods are seaweeds, nuts and seeds and DGLV (dark green leafy vegetables) such as spinach, kale, rocket, watercress, parsley, chard, broccoli and savoy cabbage.

- Epsom bath salts are magnesium sulphate and are an effective way to increase your levels of magnesium. A large mug in a hot bath for 15-30 minutes, three times a week can be very beneficial as magnesium is well absorbed through the skin. This can be very helpful before bed if you have problems getting to sleep. You can also find magnesium oils to rub into the skin (Better you or Ancient Minerals).

### Bicarbonate test for stomach acid levels (HCl)

- One of the easiest ways to test and see if you may have low stomach acid is to do the bicarb test at home.

- This test must be done on an empty stomach, so the best time of day is on waking before eating breakfast.

- Mix one teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda in a small glass of water and drink.

- Wait and see if you begin to burp or feel significantly bloated. If you have sufficient stomach acid the bicarbonate will react with the HCl and produce carbon dioxide gas, which will make you burp.

- If little or no reaction occurs within 5 minutes you can suspect low stomach acid.

### Top tips for supporting digestive juices

- Always relax before a meal and eat in a mindful way.

- Drink water away from food as this can dilute digestive juices.

- Certain herbs and bitter salad leaves support digestion. For e.g. chamomile, dandelion, peppermint, beetroot leaves and rocket.

- Unfiltered live apple cider vinegar with the 'mother' can be very effective (Biona). The mother is a cloudy substance that contains live enzymes. Use in salad dressings but also have 1-2 teaspoons neat just before each meal to really boost your digestion if for e.g. you had no reaction with the bicarb test.



Stomach acid plays many important roles:

It digests proteins into amino acids.

We use amino acids to make neurotransmitters, anti-bodies, hormones, to neutralise toxins in the liver, to carry substances around the body and for growth & repair.

Triggers the release of digestive enzymes that help release vitamins & minerals from our food & digest fats & carbohydrates.

Works with intrinsic factor to absorb vitamin B12 for energy and immunity.

Acts as a first line of defence against pathogenic bacteria, parasites and yeasts.

Helps to maintain the right balance of bacteria in our gut.

**\*\*Please note that names in brackets are brands you can find in the UK in most health food stores and online from Ocado or Plant Organic\*\***