

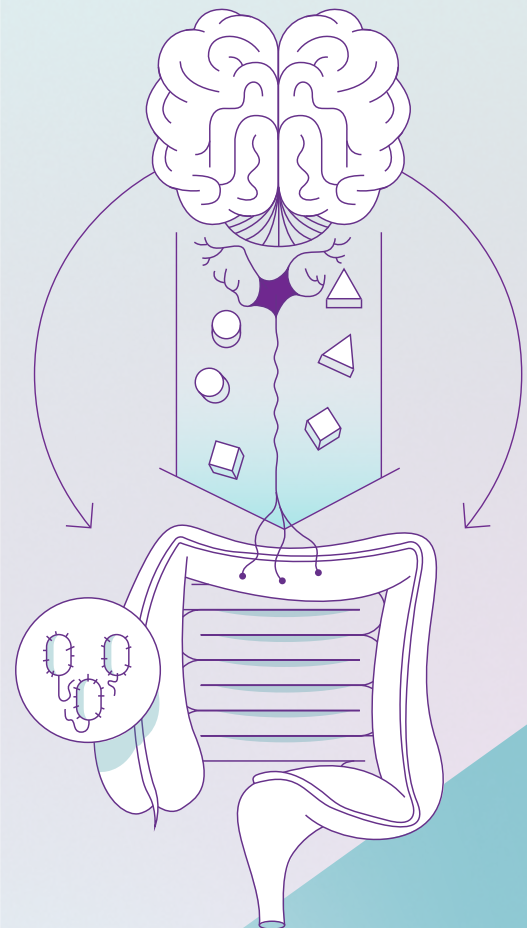
UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON GUT HEALTH

Stress is something that we all face, and it doesn't only affect our mood. It can also affect various bodily systems and functions. Recent research emphasizes the impact of stress on our stomach and intestines, which are part of the gastrointestinal (GI) system.

Stress can impact how the gut and the brain communicate, known as the gut brain axis. The disruption of this communication axis can impact GI function, and potentially lead to commonly experienced GI disorders, such as inflammatory bowel disease (which can cause pain and swelling in the intestine), irritable bowel syndrome (which can cause stomach pain, gas and either diarrhea or constipation), and gastroesophageal reflux disease (often recognized as reflux or indigestion).

THE GUT-BRAIN AXIS EXPLAINED

The gut-brain axis is an ongoing communication between the gut and the brain, affecting many bodily functions. For example, when you encounter a stressful situation, such as giving a major presentation, your brain sends signals to your gut, causing the "butterflies" sensation in your stomach. Similarly, problems in the gut, like poor digestion or inflammation, can alert the brain, impacting your mood and stress levels.



GUT IMBALANCES CAN AFFECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH, CAUSING:

difficulty concentrating	
brain fog	headaches
low energy	memory issues

HOW STRESS CAN IMPAIR GUT FUNCTION:

ALTERATIONS IN GASTROINTESTINAL MOTILITY

Stress can disrupt the digestive system's movements, causing symptoms like constipation or diarrhea.

INCREASE IN VISCERAL PERCEPTION

Increased stress levels can make us more sensitive to sensations arising from our GI system leading to abdominal pain, greater pronounced sensation of bloating or fullness, and feelings of nausea.

CHANGES IN GASTROINTESTINAL SECRETION:

Stress can impair your body's ability to produce digestive juices, which makes it harder for you to digest food properly, impairing your absorption of nutrients and energy from food.

INCREASE IN INTESTINAL PERMEABILITY

Stress can damage the intestinal cells, leading to a weakened "wall" or barrier, allowing harmful substances to leave the GI tract which can trigger inflammation.

IMPAIRED BLOOD FLOW

Stress can inhibit blood flow to our GI tract, hindering the repair of the gut lining and increasing vulnerability to damage.

DISRUPTION OF INTESTINAL MICROBIOTA

Stress can imbalance gut bacteria, causing digestive issues and immune system disturbances.

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE GUT HEALTH:



MINDFUL EATING

Stress often leads to hurried meals, which can compromise digestion. By intentionally slowing down and being present during meals, you give your body the chance to digest food properly. Ensure you're seated and free from distractions like electronic devices. This approach helps with better nutrient absorption and reduces digestive discomfort, such as bloating and indigestion.



DEEP BREATHING BEFORE MEALS

Engaging in deep breathing exercises just before you start eating can have a profound effect on your digestive system. Deep breaths signal to your body that it's time to relax, shifting it from a state of stress (sympathetic nervous system activation) to a state conducive to digestion (parasympathetic nervous system activation). This transition facilitates the release of digestive enzymes, making digestion smoother and more efficient.



THOROUGH CHewing

The process of digestion begins in the mouth, where enzymes in saliva start breaking down food. By chewing your food thoroughly, you create smaller, more manageable pieces for your digestive system to handle, easing the workload on your gut and enhancing nutrient breakdown and absorption. This practice can also prevent issues like indigestion and bloating, making meals more enjoyable and less stressful for your body.

INCORPORATING THESE PRACTICES CAN LEAD TO SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN GUT HEALTH.

They help in managing stress's physiological effects, reducing the likelihood of gastrointestinal problems, and promoting a sense of overall well-being. By focusing on how you eat, you create a healthier environment for your digestive system.