

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO

# Intestinal Health



## Life Stages *and* Intestinal Changes

**Yakult**

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# Intestinal Changes in Pregnancy

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During pregnancy, the body goes through many changes. One of the less-discussed changes is how it can impact your digestive system. Constantly fluctuating hormones can leave some women experiencing a raft of digestive issues such as constipation, bloating, gas and diarrhoea.

We cannot change the inevitable hormonal roller-coaster, but there are some steps we can take to best support our digestive system during this time. The degree to which the mothers intestinal microbiota contributes to the long term health of her fetus is only now beginning to be explored. All the more reason to care for your digestive system during pregnancy.



# Here are some tips to help support your intestinal health during pregnancy:

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## Indigestion and bloating

Certain vegetables such as onions, cabbage and beans can produce more gas than others. While spicy, fried or fatty food can cause indigestion and heartburn while pregnant. Avoid foods that cause discomfort.



**Tip: If you are not sure what is causing this, keep a food and symptom diary. Understand that it can change between trimesters.**

2

## Nausea

Healthy snacks can be useful to combat nausea. Snacking or eating smaller but frequent meals can also be helpful to avoid indigestion, especially later in pregnancy.



**Tip: Salted dry crackers, dried fruit, cereal or a handful of nuts/fruit or trail mix are good snack options.**



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## Constipation

Carry a water bottle with you to keep your fluids up, especially when increasing your fibre intake to help prevent constipation.



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## Probiotics

Probiotics are shown to be safe to consume during pregnancy and during breastfeeding. Probiotics help to support intestinal health which may benefit the mother by increasing the numbers of beneficial bacteria, reducing the risk of inflammation and helping to regulate bowel movement.



# Intestinal Health in Babies and Children

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It is thought that infants are born with a sterile gastrointestinal tract or very low levels of microbes. There is ongoing debate among experts on the matter, however, we know after birth the intestines are rapidly populated by bacteria, and the composition of this is determined by a number of factors, such as:

## Mode of Delivery

Babies born vaginally uptake bacteria from the birth canal, whereas those born via caesarean receive bacteria from their mother's skin.

## Feeding Type

Babies fed with breast milk receive bacteria from their mother, and those fed with formula may receive probiotics added to the formula.

## Hospitalisation

If the infant spends extended periods of time in the hospital, they are exposed to a lower variety of bacteria, unlike if they are exposed to family and friends once home.

## Antibiotic Use

Both whilst in utero or once born, the use of antibiotics by either mother or child can shape the bacterial numbers and types in the infant's intestines.

# Intestinal Health in Adults

From your 20's through to your late 40's and 50's, life can seem like a constant juggling of different priorities and needs. The combination of a reduced focus on your body's needs and common lifestyle factors can have a significant impact on your intestinal health.

## Common lifestyle factors that can upset the balance of bacteria in your intestines can include:

- Poor diet choices
- Binge drinking
- Poor sleep quality or lack of sleep
- Smoking
- Stress at work or home
- Certain medications (e.g. antibiotics)
- Inactivity



Supporting better intestinal health during adulthood does not require drastic lifestyle changes; rather small, achievable daily steps can be taken to help support your intestinal health. Here are four simple ways to show your intestines a little love:



## Meal Planning

Take the effort out of lunches or last minute dinner ideas by planning meals ahead of time. Plan to include a variety of fresh foods in season. Get the family involved in the planning so everyone has a meal they will enjoy while encouraging healthy choices and a more balanced diet.



## Balance Activity and Manage Stress

Make sure to balance exercise with rest and mindfulness to allow your body (and mind) to recover. Stress can result in digestive symptoms. Prioritise your emotional and mental wellbeing.







## Limit Alcohol

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Alcohol can irritate your intestines and promote inflammation when consumed in excess. The Australian guidelines recommend no more than 2 standard drinks on any day for both men and women.



## Regular Sleep

Avoid late or large dinners. Wind down and disconnect from devices 30 minutes before bedtime. Create a comfortable space that is quiet, dark and not too hot or cold. A recent study found poor sleep quality was associated with increased caffeine and sugar cravings.



# Intestinal Health and Ageing

As we live longer, our bodily functions gradually slow down, leading to a smaller variety and number of bacteria in our intestinal tract.

Our immune health is dependent on a wide variety and number of beneficial bacteria. The reduction of this over time can weaken the intestinal barrier, and impact our body's ability to fight illness, infection, and intestinal irritation. Things to consider as we age include:

## **Dentition**

Teeth are not just essential for a smile but are crucial in our ability to eat. Wear and tear over a lifetime of eating, loss of teeth and the need for dentures increases in older age. Ill-fitting dentures or a lack of teeth will impact what we can eat, resulting in poor food variety, a potential lack of nutrients and can also affect digestion.

## **Constipation**

The slowing of the intestines and reduction of digestive fluids as we age causes a high rate of constipation in older age groups. Ensuring you have enough fluid and fibre in your diet is important for regularity in your bowel movements.

# What is Yakult and What Sets it Apart?

This guide was developed by the team at Yakult Australia to help more Australians understand their digestive system. Yakult is a fermented milk drink containing a very high concentration of the beneficial bacterium *Lactobacillus casei* Shirota (LcS) strain. This strain of bacteria can only be found in Yakult and was discovered by Dr Minoru Shirota in 1930.

There are 6.5 billion live LcS probiotic bacteria in every 65ml bottle of Yakult. The LcS strain is proven to survive strong gastric and bile acids to arrive alive in the digestive system, increasing the numbers of beneficial bacteria there.



Yakult and its unique probiotic strain LcS is backed by more than 80 years of continuous research on safe and effective use.

\*References available on request

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