

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO

Intestinal Health

Yakult

Table of Contents

How your intestines can impact the body	2
How to listen to your intestines	4
Simple ways to support healthier intestines	6
The power of prebiotics and probiotics	8
Getting active	11
Mindfulness and rest	12
What is Yakult and what sets it apart?	13



How Our Intestines Can Impact the Body

81% of those surveyed recognise that the digestive system has an impact on overall health

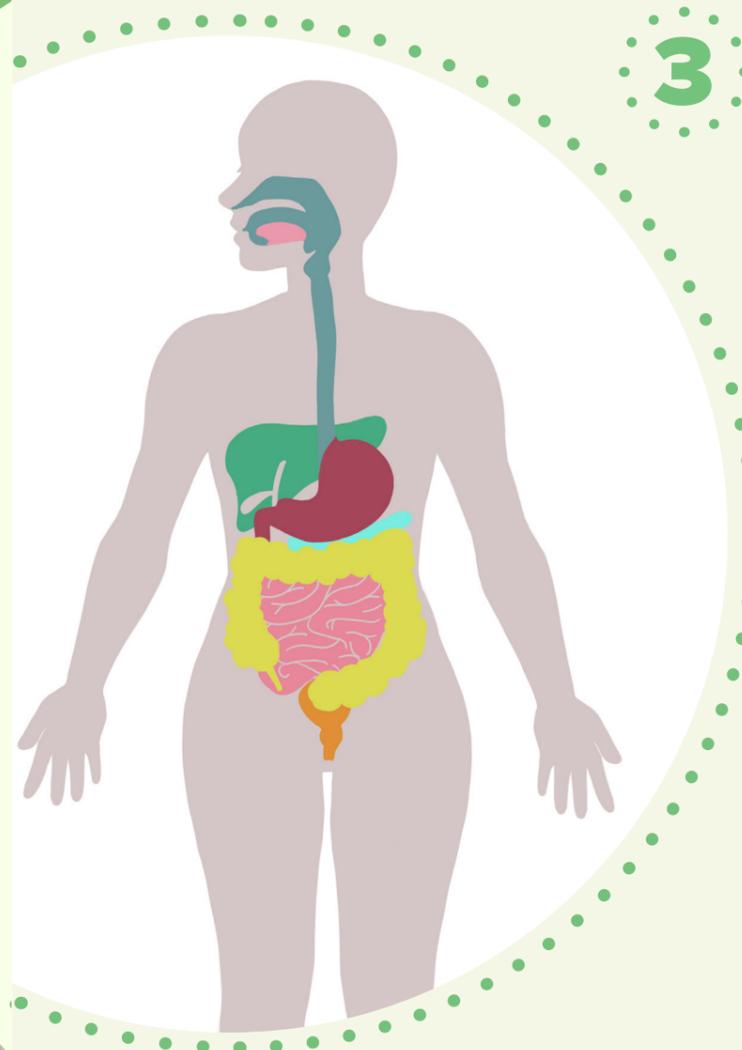
22% of those surveyed said they did not know how to improve their intestinal health

The health of our intestines impacts the body in ways that extend beyond the digestive system alone. In this guide we will explore the role of the gastrointestinal tract and how it impacts your overall health.

We recently surveyed 1,000 Australian consumers and found that 8 in 10 respondents recognise that the digestive system has an impact on overall health. Despite this, we found that while 72% of respondents have recently attempted to improve their overall health, only 56% identified that they made a proactive effort to improve their intestinal health. The main reasons for not improving intestinal health was that it was not a priority (49%) or they simply did not know how (22%).



2



Sleep

- Intestinal microbiota may be linked to the circadian clock which controls our ability to regulate our sleep cycle
- Poor sleep patterns and sleep deprivation can reduce intestinal microbiota diversity

Mood and mental health

- Brain performance and function may be linked to intestinal microbiota makeup
- Disturbances in intestinal microbiota balance are linked to anxiety
- 90% of serotonin (our happiness hormone) is produced in our gastrointestinal tract, and some harmful bacteria can affect its production

Metabolic health

- Bacteria in our intestines make secondary products that influence hormone signals. These signals can affect appetite, hunger and whether we burn or store fat
- Obesity, type 2 diabetes and metabolic disease may be linked to inflammation caused by bacterial imbalance

Skin (acne, eczema)

- Intestinal microbiota imbalance may affect acne development
- The link between the intestines and immune system has an impact on dermatitis and psoriasis development

Digestive system

- The bacteria in your intestines help break down food into nutrients that can then be absorbed by the body
- Digestion by the intestinal microbiota produces essential nutrients for the body
- An imbalance in the microbiota can cause gas, bloating, constipation and diarrhoea

Immune system

- Immune cells located in the intestinal lining are influenced by the intestinal microbiota
- Altered intestinal microbiota (where the potentially harmful bacteria outnumber the good bacteria) can cause a weakened immune system, leaving us more vulnerable to illnesses

How to Listen to Your Intestines

The gastrointestinal tract houses the highest concentration of microbiota in the human body. This is why the intestines can have such an impact on our everyday functioning and on our overall health. So, just how healthy are your intestines? Tick how many relate to you:

4

5

Intestinal Health Assessment Score

COUNT HOW MANY ITEMS YOU TICKED AND FIND OUT WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS FOR YOU.

Less than 4

Your lifestyle habits are consistent with a healthier intestine. Continue to maintain your good diet and lifestyle habits.

5 – 9

Your lifestyle habits are almost consistent with good intestinal health. Prevent future harm by improving your eating habits (e.g., increase fibre intake) and lifestyle to improve intestinal health.

15 or more

Your lifestyle is consistent with individuals who may complain of poor intestinal health. Ongoing poor intestinal health can increase the risk of developing acute and chronic digestive concerns. Diet and lifestyle changes should be considered.

10 – 14

Your lifestyle habits could be putting you at risk of poor intestinal health. Improve this by having regular meals, eating more fibre and probiotics. Increasing exercise, sleep and relaxation is also recommended.

Did you know?

The medical definition of constipation is indicated by bowel movement less than three times/week, hard stool, experiencing pain when passing stool, or little stool. Opening your bowels less than once per week is a serious condition.

✓ Diet



- Skip breakfast most days**
Go without breakfast more days than not
- No set meal times**
Regularly skipping main meals
- Barely eat fruit and vegetable**
Fewer than 10 serves/week
- Mostly eat fast food**
Four days/week
- Recent course of antibiotics**
Within the last three to six months
- Irregular intake of probiotics**
Only consuming after an illness

✓ Lifestyle



- Stressed or anxious**
Feel overwhelmed on a weekly basis
- Rarely exercise**
Less than one time/week (at least 30 min)
- Skin conditions**
Including acne, psoriasis, eczema, hives, rosacea
- Lack of sleep/poor sleep quality**
Waking up through the night, not feeling refreshed
- Often unwell**
At least once/month

✓ Digestion



- Constipation**
Bowel movement less than three times/week, hard stool, pain when passing stool, or little stool passed
- Incomplete defecation**
The feeling of still needing to pass stool after an extended period of time on the toilet
- Mushy stool or diarrhea**
Occurring three or more times/week
- Irregular bowel consistency**
Alternating between constipation and diarrhoea
- Foul-smelling stool**
Unusually strong, offensive smelling
- Gas and Bloating**
With pain and discomfort
- Reflux**
Two or more times/week

Simple Ways to Support Healthier Intestines

Nutrition: The different foods we consume can affect the amount and type of bacteria that is found in our intestines. A greater diversity of bacteria in our gut have been linked to better digestive health. The foods that we eat are also what our intestinal microbiota feed on, and a well-balanced diet can ensure that we adequately support our bacterial balance. There are some dietary patterns that help support our intestinal health:

1. A diet rich in fibre (~30g fibre/day)

Foods high in fibre also helps us feel fuller for longer, these include:

- Whole grains
- Legumes
- Vegetables



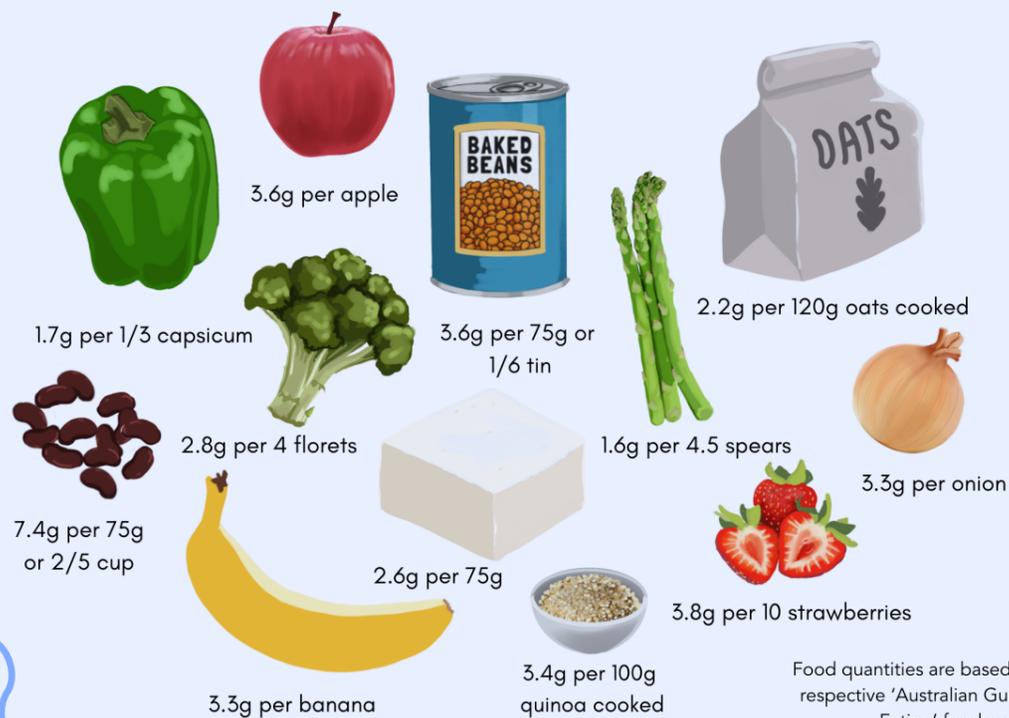
Tip: Aim for 5 serves of vegetables a day as often as you can. A serve is 1/2 cup of cooked vegetables or 1 cup of raw salads

2. A variety of colourful plant foods

Consuming different coloured fruit and vegetables will ensure you include a wide variety of vitamins and minerals

Plant foods have been shown to help with digestion and reduce the risk of some diseases

Fibre content of fibre rich foods



Food quantities are based on 1 serve of respective 'Australian Guide to Health Eating' food group

3. Adequate fluids

Water and fluid helps keep your digestive system moving in the right direction

Insufficient water causes your body to be deprived of fluid resulting in harder stools that are difficult to pass

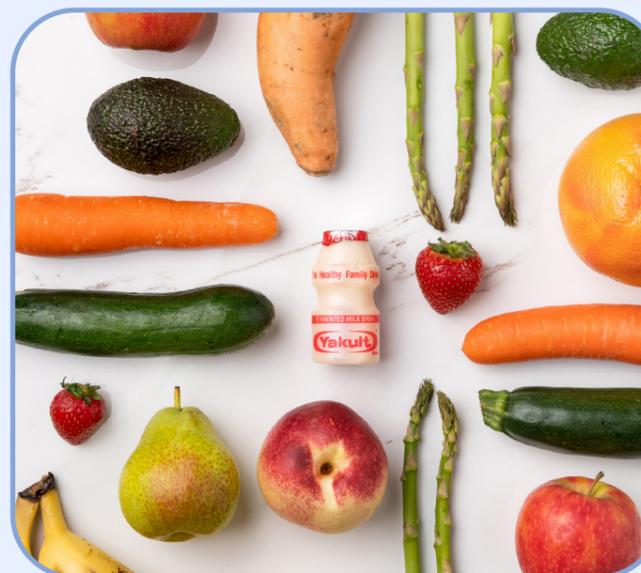


Tip: Check your hydration levels. Your urine should be a light straw colour. Need more fluid but not a fan of still water? Try adding fruits or herbs to your water, sparkling water, or herbal teas

4. Limited processed foods

Fried, oily and fatty foods can slow down the digestive process

Highly processed and low fibre foods may encourage the wrong types of bacteria to grow



What Australians believe can help contribute to better intestinal health

- 77% believe eating a balanced diet
- 43% consuming a probiotic regularly
- 67% eating a lot of fruit and vegetables
- 55% reducing stress
- 67% exercising regularly
- 62% eating a high fibre diet
- 58% limiting the amount fatty foods in your diet
- 56% reducing your alcohol consumption

5. Pre and Probiotic Foods (see page 8)

8

What are Prebiotics

Prebiotics are non-digestible fibres that feed your intestinal microbiota. Including this type of fibre in your diet can help maintain digestive balance by providing nourishment for the beneficial bacteria in your intestines. Essentially, prebiotics lay the groundwork for probiotics to thrive.

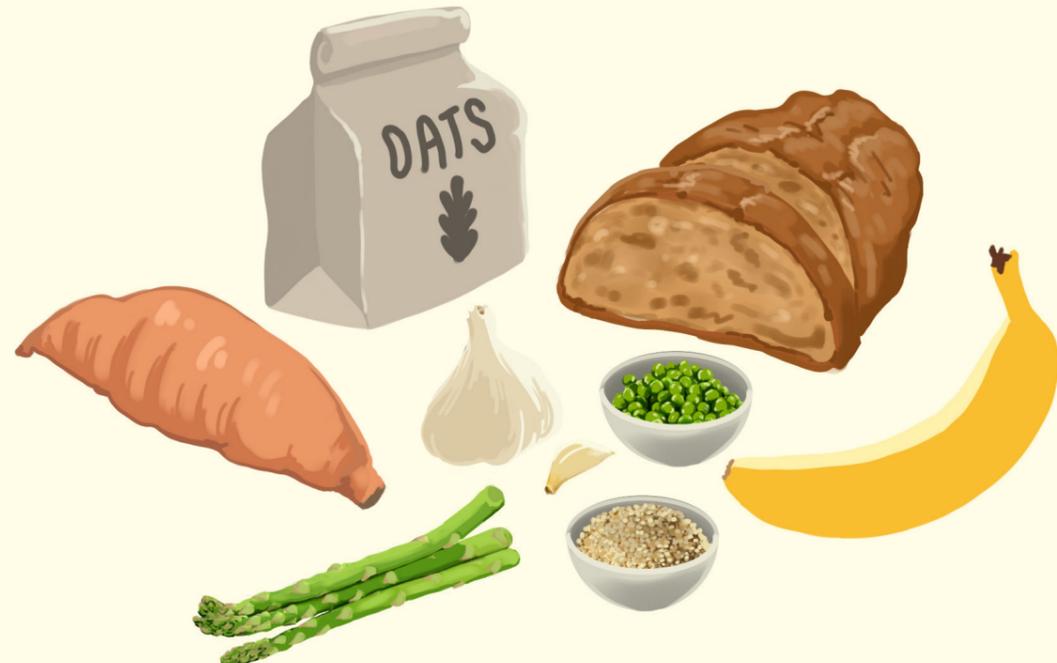
Easy Prebiotics to Include in Your Diet

Some high fibre foods can result in gas production which can cause excess wind and sometimes bloating. Gas can be produced by some bacteria as they break down fibre.



Tip: To help avoid a digestive upset, increase high fibre foods slowly (over 7 days) to give your intestines time to adapt to your changing diet

The Power of Prebiotics and Probiotics



9

Exploring the Role of Probiotics

Probiotics can be defined as live microorganisms that when consumed in adequate amounts can provide a health benefit. Probiotics can help to maintain the balance of beneficial and potentially harmful bacteria in your intestines. It does this by not only encouraging the growth of beneficial bacteria, but also suppressing potentially harmful bacteria.

Our survey found that 7 in 10 respondents have tried a probiotic, with 3 in 10 reporting they consume a probiotic regularly. To help support the intestines, probiotics need to be included into your regular daily routine to maintain that consistently high number of beneficial bacteria.

Of those who are not currently consuming a probiotic, just under a third (29%) said they were not sure of the benefits.

The Benefits of Probiotics

Lifestyle factors such as the natural ageing process, stress, poor diet and some medications can upset the balance of the intestinal microbiota. Probiotics may help to:

- Maintain and replenish the number of beneficial bacteria (this is especially important during and after taking antibiotics)
- Reduce the number of potentially harmful bacteria and the toxins by-products produced
- Assist with the digestion and absorption of nutrients
- Contribute to the formation of some vitamins
- Help to enhance the immune system (this is particularly beneficial during winter as probiotics may help reduce the occurrence and severity of colds) (Hao Q et al 2015)

72% of respondents have tried a probiotic while 31% are regularly consuming a probiotic

Tips to help choose a probiotic

Not all probiotics are the same. The actions, and health benefits can vary depending on a wide variety of factors. When researching an effective probiotic, you will be looking for probiotics that contain the following characteristics:

- Scientifically proven to survive the stomach acids and bile juices to reach the intestines alive
- Contain an adequate number of live beneficial bacteria
- More is not necessarily better - The amount of bacteria (CFU*) needed to have a beneficial effect depends on the strain of bacteria
- Proven to exert beneficial health effects in humans

While there are many benefits to probiotics, consistency is important to help maintain good intestinal microbiota. Probiotics as part of your diet every now and again will hold little value. The benefits of probiotics are generally noticeable after regular intake (an average of 2-4 weeks), once the probiotic strains have had time to colonise the intestines.

State the full three-part name of each bacterial strain.



*Colony-forming unit (CFU): CFU is used to determine the number of live bacteria in a sample. The number reported should remain alive until end of the use by date.

Exercise



Exercise has been shown to benefit your intestinal health by encouraging positive changes to your microbiota.

While no single form of exercise is currently considered superior for intestinal health, **current research suggests that regular consistent exercise over just as little as six weeks is able to improve intestinal microbiota.**

Movement and exercise can help to stimulate digestion. **Committing to at least 30 minutes each day of physical activity, through intentional and unintentional movement** (such as gardening, cleaning the house), **can increase blood flow to the organs and muscles in your intestinal tract.** When we exercise, our intestines naturally contract allowing waste to pass through our digestive system, encouraging bowel regularity.

Tips:

1. Brisk walking and cycling is low impact while still quite effective in encouraging digestive movement
2. Abdominal crunches or sit-ups can strengthen core muscles and help prevent bloating and gas
3. Slow stretching such as yoga exercises can help relax abdominal muscles with the added benefit in helping to reduce stress
4. Limit the amount of time you spend sitting and break up your day with short bursts of movement. Small movements will add up over the day, weeks and months

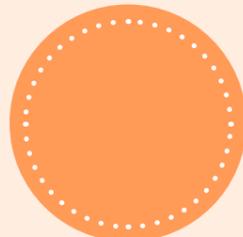
Mindfulness and Rest

The term 'mindfulness' refers to a state of mind, achieved through focusing awareness on the present moment.

Research has shown that stress can alter the makeup of our intestinal microbiota. It is no wonder we get that fluttering feeling in our stomach when experiencing nervousness or excitement. Our intestines and brain are closely connected, communicating with each other via various pathways within our body. The intestines are often referred to as the "second brain" as it is the only organ to boast its own independent nervous system, with an intricate sensory network embedded in the gut wall.



If stress is constant, it starts to affect not only our mind but also our digestive system, due to this close link between the nervous system and the intestines. Our body uses the 'flight or fight' response during acute stress as a survival mechanism. However, ongoing chronic stress can be detrimental for your overall health.



We should aim to keep our body in the 'rest and digest' response. This can be achieved by allowing yourself time to savour the food you are eating, working purposefully by paying attention to each task, and taking the time to connect and communicate with others. This decreases heart rate and improves digestion.



Tips: Ensuring rest is taken in conjunction with mindfulness is essential and can be in the form of meditation, doing something you enjoy, going for a walk in the park, even journaling and using positive affirmations

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 LcS strain. This strain of bacteria can only be found in Yakult and was discovered by Dr Minoru Shirota in 1930.

There's 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 85 years of continuous research on safe and effective use.

About the Research

The survey was scripted and hosted by Decibel Research, an independent online research services provider. A representative sample of the Australian population (18+) was selected by research panel provider Pureprofile.

The sample comprises 1,000 respondents, distributed across Australia, regional and rural areas.

Fieldwork commenced on Wednesday 24th February and was completed on Friday 26th February 2021. To qualify for the survey each respondent had to be aged 18+ and reside within Australia.

*References available upon request



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