

How to improve gut health in children

TODDLER

ARTICLE

DEC 22, 2021

A child's gut health says a lot about their overall health. Help your child avoid overeating and processed foods, as well as encourage him or her to exercise regularly and drink plenty of fluids.

A child's gut health actually says a lot about their internal health. Keep their gut and overall health up by practicing these tips.

If you've noticed your little one experiencing discomfort and developing digestive problems, it is something that needs to be addressed immediately! If left for a prolonged period of time, digestive problems could lead to far more serious issues like behavioural problems or difficulty in potty training.¹

So it is important to maintain a healthy gut for your child from the get-go. A healthy child is a happy one, after all.

Here's how to improve your child's gut health (and you could use these tips for yourself too!):

1. Avoid Overeating

It may be tempting to give in to your parent's advice that you should be feeding your child a lot because they are growing, but be sure to keep it to a reasonable limit. Kids should be eating proper portions and what works for each child may differ from one to the next. You can refer to this feeding guide for your little one.^{2,3}

Watch your kid's diet carefully to ensure they are getting enough food so that they are not going hungry, but don't overfeed them to the point where their digestive systems may not be able to handle it.



2. Feed them high-fibre foods

An apple a day keeps the doctor away! This is not just something people say to get their kids to eat more apples - it is a true statement especially when it comes to gut health. Of course, it isn't just applicable to apples. Keep your child's gut healthy and happy with fibre-rich foods like beans, berries and high fibre cereals.

3. Drink plenty of fluids at appropriate times

Keep your child well-hydrated throughout the day. Plenty of fluids will have a good effect on your child's bowels. This is particularly important in hot climates such as Singapore's - all the more so when haze season hits! Milk is also good for your kids to help with their gut health.



4. Exercise

Let your kids get their exercise done at the playground or at home. Either way, they need exercise to keep their body healthy and happy, and also to promote good bacteria in their bodies. When kids exercise, endorphins are released and this helps to relieve stress, which also leads to better gut health. If you allow them to exercise outdoors during the early morning hours, they will also be able to absorb essential vitamin D, which is essential for their bones, calcium levels as well as skin and hair health.

5. No fast-foods! No processed foods!

Oh, how tempting it is to just let the kids go wild with a fast food meal. They will be really happy with you for days and they will probably get all their homework done on time, but this will be done at the expense of their gut health. If they are already suffering from digestive problems, putting more processed food in their bodies will only make things worse.

6. Get good bacteria into your kids

This means eating foods like yogurt or even miso. Recently, plenty of products have been popping up promoting good bacteria - like kefir. You can even make them at

home.

References:

1. How Gut Flora can Impact Children's Behaviour. Available at <https://mindd.org/healthy-gut-flora-childrens-behaviour/>. Accessed on August 21 2017.
2. Feeding Guide for the first year. Available at https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/healthlibrary/conditions/pediatrics/feeding_guide_for_the_first_year_90,P02209/. Accessed on September 5 2017.
3. Nutritional Considerations for Infants and Children. Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK209820/>. Accessed on September 5 2017.
4. Exercise And Protein May Help Good Gut Bacteria Get Their Groove On. Available at <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2014/06/13/321355377/exercise-and-protein-may-help-good-gut-bacteria-get-their-groove-on>. Accessed on August 21 2017.
5. 5 Ways To Improve Your Child's Gut Health. Available at <https://www.healthymummy.com/5-ways-improve-childs-gut-health/>. Accessed on August 21 2017.
6. 5 Ways to Boost Your Kid's Gut Health. Available at <https://www.parents.com/health/hygiene/ways-to-boost-your-kids-gut-health/>. Accessed on August 21 2017.

