

Nourishing the Mind: How Your Gut and Brain are Connected

WE USUALLY THINK OF THE BRAIN AS THE CONTROL CENTRE OF THE BODY, WORKING ON ITS OWN. BUT MODERN SCIENCE SHOWS THAT THE BRAIN AND THE GUT ARE CLOSELY LINKED AND CONSTANTLY COMMUNICATING. THIS IDEA IS NOT NEW. OVER 2,000 YEARS AGO, THE GREEK DOCTOR HIPPOCRATES SAID, "ALL DISEASE BEGINS IN THE GUT." TODAY, RESEARCH SHOWS HE WAS RIGHT—ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO MENTAL HEALTH.

The gut and brain talk to each other through what is called the gut-brain axis. You can think of it like a two-way highway. Messages travel up and down this highway through the vagus nerve, which carries information about hunger, stress, inflammation, and mood. When the gut is healthy, this communication line works smoothly, helping you feel calm, focused, and emotionally steady. But if the gut becomes irritated or unbalanced, it can send signals that lead to stress, anxiety, low mood, or brain fog.

A big part of this system is the gut microbiome—the trillions of bacteria and other tiny organisms living in your digestive system, mainly inside the large intestine. These microbes do much more than help digest food. They also help protect against illness, support the immune system, and produce important brain chemicals. Amazingly, they create about 90% of the body's serotonin, a chemical that affects happiness, sleep, and appetite.

When the microbiome is diverse and balanced, it supports a clearer mind and a more stable mood. When it is out of balance—because of stress, poor

diet, or antibiotics—it can affect how you feel both physically and mentally.

The good news is that you can support your gut—and your brain—through the foods you eat. To nourish your gut, focus on three key types of foods:

1. **Prebiotics** – the fibre found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and beans that feeds the good bacteria in your gut, helping them grow strong.
2. **Probiotics** – the live bacteria found in fermented foods like plain yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and kimchi, which add beneficial bacteria directly into your gut.
3. **Healthy fats** – found in olive oil, avocados, nuts, and oily fish (like salmon), which support the structure of your brain cells, keeping them flexible and functional.

By choosing whole, fresh foods and cutting back on highly processed and ultra-processed foods (which feed harmful bacteria), you can create a healthier gut environment. And when your gut thrives, your brain benefits too.

Simply put: taking care of your gut is one of the easiest and most effective ways to support your mood, focus, and overall mental well-being.



Rest Well, Live Well: Simple ways to improve your Sleep Quality

MOST OF US KNOW HOW MUCH BETTER WE FEEL AFTER A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP, YET IT OFTEN FALLS DOWN THE PRIORITY LIST WHEN LIFE GETS BUSY. WITH WORK, FAMILY, AND DAILY RESPONSIBILITIES PULLING US IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS, REST IS OFTEN THE FIRST THING WE COMPROMISE. THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT SMALL, PRACTICAL CHANGES—WHAT WE CALL SLEEP HYGIENE—CAN MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN IMPROVING SLEEP QUALITY AND HELPING US FEEL MORE BALANCED DAY-TO-DAY.

A simple way to start is keeping a consistent sleep routine. Going to bed and waking up at roughly the same time each day—even on weekends—helps your body settle into a natural rhythm. Over time, this consistency makes it easier to drift off at night and wake up feeling refreshed.

Your environment also matters more than you might think. A cool, dark, and quiet bedroom

supports deeper, more restful sleep. Reducing screen time before bed helps too, as the blue light from phones and tablets keeps the brain alert. Even small cues, like dimming the lights or choosing a calming activity before bed, signal to your body that it is time to slow down.

Daily habits play a role as well. Regular physical activity can improve sleep quality, but intense exercise is best done earlier in the day. Being mindful of caffeine and alcohol—especially in the evening—can prevent disrupted nights. If your mind tends to race before bed, taking a few minutes to jot down lingering thoughts or tomorrow's to-dos can help create mental space.

Good sleep is not about perfection—it is about creating conditions that make rest easier to achieve. By making a few gentle adjustments, you can build healthier sleep habits that leave you feeling more energised, focused, and ready for the day ahead.





Caring for yourself this Festive Season

AS THE FESTIVE SEASON APPROACHES, MANY OF US LOOK FORWARD TO CELEBRATING WITH FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND SOME WELL-EARNED TIME TO UNWIND. BUT AMID THE GATHERINGS, AND TREATS, IT IS EASY FOR HEALTHY HABITS TO SLIP AWAY. THE GOOD NEWS IS YOU DO NOT NEED A STRICT PLAN OR A MAJOR LIFESTYLE OVERHAUL TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF. SMALL, STEADY CHANGES CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE — HELPING YOU FINISH THE YEAR FEELING MORE GROUNDED AND SUPPORTED.

1. Move More, Sit Less

Cold weather and busy schedules can make it tempting to stay indoors, but even light activity keeps your energy levels up and boosts your mood. Take a brisk walk after Christmas gatherings, or add a few minutes of gentle movement while you are preparing meals. Every bit of movement supports your heart and mind.

2. Prioritise Rest and Sleep

Late nights and festive events can easily disrupt your sleep. Try to keep a regular bedtime and limit screen time before bed. A short nap or a quiet moment during the day can also help you recharge. Rest is not a luxury — it is essential for good health and a happier holiday season.

3. Eat Smart, Enjoy the Treats

Food is one of the joys of the season, and you do not have to deny yourself your favourites. The key is balance. Fill your plate with colourful vegetables and lean proteins, drink plenty of water, and enjoy festive sweets in moderation. Savour each bite — mindful eating helps you feel satisfied without overdoing it.

4. Manage Holiday Stress

The holidays can be wonderful, but they can also be overwhelming. Take short breaks to breathe, step outside, or enjoy a quiet cup of tea. A few calm minutes can reset your mind and reduce tension, helping you stay present and enjoy what matters most.

5. Say No without feeling Guilty

The festive season is wonderful, but it can also feel overwhelming. Remember that it is perfectly okay to decline some invitations or events. Choosing to spend a bit of “me time” away from the hustle and bustle of Christmas activities can help you recharge and enjoy the season more fully.

6. Stay Connected

The festive season is often portrayed as joyful and merry — but it is completely okay if that is not how you are feeling. For many, this time of year is less about celebration and more about simply getting through. Reaching out — or allowing others to reach out to you — can make a real difference. Small, meaningful moments of connection with colleagues, friends, or neighbours can help soften the season and remind us we are supported. Kindness, in any measure, strengthens our sense of connection, and even the smallest gestures can help carry us through this time of year.

Small changes make the difference

As the year winds down, choose one or two small habits to focus on. Whether it is walking more, sleeping better, or pausing to breathe, every healthy choice adds up. You will be setting yourself up for a healthier start to the new year.

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or comments, please feel
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