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Foods for Gut Health

Did you know that [80 percent of your immune system](#) resides in your gut? A growing body of research shows that gut health significantly impacts our metabolic health, including blood-sugar equilibrium. So how do you give your gut more love to stay ahead in a post-quarantine world? Feed it with beneficial, bacteria-balancing foods. Here's how.



Good Bugs: Fermented Foods & Fiber

Research shows that beneficial gut bugs play a role in immune resilience by helping to [support robust internal defenses against foreign invaders](#) and [healthy metabolism](#). Fermented foods contain probiotics, or live microorganisms that work to balance good bugs in the gut. To support your gut microbiome, aim to eat one serving of fermented foods daily, such as:

- Yogurt
- Sauerkraut and other fermented vegetables
- Kefir (go for the no sugar variety)
- Kimchi

Dietary fiber is also crucial for immune function and metabolic health. It fuels the growth of beneficial gut bacteria while [binding to bile](#) in the gastrointestinal tract. Bile serves as a transportation medium for a variety of toxins, including heavy metals, so the bile-binding effects of fiber offer potent detoxification-supporting activity. Here are some fiber-rich foods to incorporate into your diet:

- Dark leafy greens
- Garlic
- Asparagus
- Nuts & seeds
- Onion
- Artichoke
- Sweet potato

Resistant Starch Supports Metabolic Health

Resistant starch is a type of dietary carbohydrate fiber that may be particularly helpful for metabolic health. Because enzymes in our small intestines cannot break down resistant starch, it arrives intact in the large intestine, feeding beneficial gut bacteria.

The process also produces metabolites, such as short-chain fatty acids, that [support healthy blood sugar levels](#), an indispensable component of metabolic health. Resistant starch consumption has also been found to reduce visceral fat, a significant contributor to metabolic dysfunction. Resistant starch is found in specific foods, including:

- Green (unripe) plantains and green plantain flour
- Legumes such as chickpeas and lentils
- Cooked and cooled white potatoes or white rice

Limit Sugar and Industrial Seed Oils



To optimize your gut health, you'll also want to limit your intake of refined sugar and industrial seed oils. The refined sugar found in many processed and packaged foods [promotes the growth of opportunistic gut bugs](#), including the yeast *Candida albicans*. The best way to minimize refined sugar intake is to eat less processed foods and more whole foods. Often, we crave sugar because we aren't eating

enough nutrient dense foods that offer satiation. Also, if you are routinely eating sugar, blood sugar regulation can be a challenge, creating a vicious physiological cycle where your body needs more and more sugar to offset insulin production. Regularly eating nutrient dense, whole foods can help kick this unpleasant cycle to the curb. Try:

- Non-starchy vegetables
- Starchy tubers (limit if practicing carb restriction)
- Nuts & seeds
- Organic, full-fat dairy products
- Whole grains and legumes (limit if practicing carb restriction)
- Organic meat, poultry, and seafood

Industrial seed oils are highly refined oils — corn, canola, cottonseed, soybean, and safflower — that were only introduced to the human diet in the past 150 years. These oils contain large quantities of omega-6 fatty acids that can disrupt the gut's inflammatory balance, promoting an ecosystem that is [not conducive to immune health](#) or metabolic well-being. Soybean oil appears to have [particularly](#) adverse effects on metabolic health and weight gain, promoting unhealthy fat accumulation in the liver.

Instead of cooking with and consuming industrial seed oils, use the following nutritious fats:

- Extra virgin olive oil
- Avocado oil
- Coconut oil
- Ghee
- Butter

Did you know...

That fasting can also support gut health? Research shows that beta-hydroxybutyrate, one of the ketones produced when you are fasting or following a ketogenic diet, promotes the [healthy function of intestinal epithelial cells](#). That's a win-win!