

5 Fascinating Facts About The Gut

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Growing research is expanding our perspective past the mechanistic, machine model of the human body to a holistic one, demonstrating wholeness and a synergistic design. A perfect example is the latest understandings of the gut. Here are five facts that will invite you to not only look at your gut differently but expand how you approach your overall health:

1. The gut has its own nervous system...

The digestive system has a brain of its own, called the enteric nervous system. The gut's brain, found in the lining of the esophagus, stomach, small intestines, and colon, contains 100 million neurons. That is more neurons than running up and down the spine! This nervous system plays roles way past digestion through regulating immunity, coordinating neurotransmitter and hormone secretions, to impacting cognitive function. 90% of serotonin (our master happiness molecule) is manufactured in the gut!

This is a new exploratory area of research that is finding a majority of illnesses including autoimmune disease and

neurological disorders linked to gut health – the holistic design in action!

2. The gut's brain operates independently of the neocortex brain...

It was a long-held belief that the neocortex brain called all the shots. That is far from the truth. The brain and gut have a bidirectional communication line. That means messages are sent in both directions via the vagus nerve and bloodstream. Ninety percent of that signaling is going from gut to brain, not the other way around.

The digestive system is filled with such a complexity that it works independent of the neocortex brain and needs no input to follow out its processes and functions. The gut-brain influences our emotions, sensitivity to pain, sleep patterns, and even how we socialise and make decisions. Ever hear of “go with your gut”? That’s not a myth or something “woo-woo”. Those gut decisions can now be looked at from a neurobiological perspective!

3. Gut health is a mirror of our emotions...

Emotions are not just in the brain but throughout our physical body. When we have a thought, biochemicals are released from the brain and travel to our bodies so we can feel what we are thinking. A full experience requires we feel! We have all felt that brain-gut connection. Think about that butterfly or even queasy feeling when you are nervous. There’s that hollow gut feeling when sadness overcomes you. How about the exciting thrill you feel when making a gutsy move?

The gut-brain will create the physical reflection or mirror of our emotions. Gastrointestinal issues such as diarrhoea, constipation, bloating, cramping, and IBS flare-ups can be

viewed as messages about our state of being. Constipation is not simply a cause of not enough fiber and water in the diet. Constipation is linked to the emotion of sadness and the inability to let go and find resolve. The gut-brain will then respond by reducing the release of our master happiness molecule serotonin that I mentioned earlier.

What if we used our gut health as another way to understand ourselves better? To bring awareness to our state of being?

4. The majority of your immunity is in your gut...

About 70 – 80% of our entire immunity is in the gut. It is called the gut-associated lymphatic tissue or GALT. When speaking of immunity, we often say it is our defense system against viruses, bacteria, or any foreign pathogen. Immunity is so much more than that. Our immune cells also referred to as our floating brain, play roles in regulating mood and emotions. Do you see the holistic design at work again? Everything is connected.

The lining of the intestinal wall is the border between you and the outside world. There are more immune cells located here than circulating throughout the body. This is one of the main interfaces with the external world and is your filter as to what you let in. This intestinal lining, which renews itself every three to four days, is essential in determining what gets absorbed into you. It is not just about healthy nutrients and food toxins. This is the filter to all that you let in; including criticisms, judgments, opinions, as well as support and accolades. Again, every aspect of you is connected. When immunity is compromised, all the way to intestinal integrity, physical, mental, and emotional states will be impacted.

5. The importance of the micro-biome...

The Human Microbiome Project has begun an extensive look into the microbes that live throughout the entire body. Yes, there are a hundred trillion microbes everywhere, from the skin, nose, mouth, and about three to four pounds worth in the gut. You are actually more bacteria than you are human cells. Think of your body as an ecosystem, an ecosystem that is completely unique to you. Just as no one, even if you are a twin, has the same gene expression, no one has the same ecosystem as you.

Here is what we now know in this ever-evolving understanding. How we interact with our microbiome directly impacts our overall well-being. Our gut microbiome participates in immune function, detoxification processes, neurotransmitter and hormone production, nutrient absorption, metabolism, libido, mood, memory, and even the clarity of our thoughts. How we cope with stress is indirectly linked to the state of our microbiome. Having a diversified microbiome of friendly bacteria not only keeps stress responses in check, it shifts the gut-brain to release neurotransmitters such as GABA, serotonin and dopamine warding off states of anxiety and depression.

Think, the happier your gut bacteria, the happy you will be!

Isn't it fascinating how the body works in a holistic design? Our health is even dependent on our collaboration within the greater ecosystem of life.

So, what actions can you take today to strengthen your gut's brain and boost your overall well-being? Meditate. Meditate and add fermented veggies to your diet? Feed your OWN Human Energy System? Add more Ayurveda into your diet?

Let us know how you are making the change in your gut!