WALK WITH a DOC Healthy Living Series

GUT HEALTH

We often overlook the well-being of our gastrointestinal (GI or "gut") health, but it's important for many reasons! Our digestive system is responsible for breaking down food, absorbing nutrients, eliminating waste from the body, and even preventing infection and inflammation. Gut health also plays a role in our mental health, weight, blood sugar, liver health, and more.

HOW TO BOOST YOUR DIGESTIVE HEALTH

1. **Healthy Diet** – Eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and nuts/seeds.
2. **Fiber** – Aim for at least 20-35 grams of fiber per day from healthy foods.
3. **Decrease Weight** – Obtaining a healthier weight can increase the diversity of your gut microbiome.
4. **Portion Control** – Shrink your plate size and eat slower to improve digestion.
5. **Stay Hydrated** – Aim for at least 64 ounces of water per day to help get rid of waste.
6. **Move More** – Take a walk after a meal to improve digestion and decrease sugar spike.
7. **Prebiotics** - Foods with prebiotics help "feed" the good bacteria in our gut.
8. **Probiotics** – Foods with this "good bacteria" include yogurt, juices, and other healthy snacks.
9. **Decrease Stress** – This can help prevent ulcers, constipation, and diarrhea.
10. **Avoid Smoking & Alcohol** – Reduces acid reflux, heartburn, diarrhea, liver problems, and cancer.
11. **Chew Gum** – Increases saliva and helps tame heartburn by balancing acid.

EXAMPLES OF FOODS THAT ARE GOOD FOR THE GUT

- **Leafy Green Veggies** – Foods like spinach, kale, and broccoli are high in nutrients, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and enzymes.
- **Whole Grains** – Foods like oatmeal, popcorn, brown rice, and whole wheat bread.
- **Bananas** – They supply the gut with inulin, a type of fiber that helps good bacteria grow.
- **Fermented Foods** – Foods like yogurt, kimchi, and sauerkraut contain probiotics.

WORST FOODS FOR THE GUT

- Avoid foods that trigger an upset stomach or change in bowel habits (ie dairy or spicy foods)
- **Red Meat** – Triggers the growth of gut bacteria that clogs arteries.
- **Alcohol** – Disrupts the balance of bacteria in the gut and helps bad bacteria grow.
- **Fried Foods** - Causes stomach irritation, diarrhea, gas, and pain.
- **Sugar/Caffeine** - Feeds harmful bacteria and has a negative effect on the digestive system.
- **Antibiotics** – Since antibiotics can't tell the difference between "good" and "bad" bacteria, eating animal products treated with antibiotics can kill your healthy bacteria too.