

# 5 KEYS TO IMPROVING GASTRO-INTESTINAL HEALTH



Taking care of your gut health is essential for overall well-being. When your digestive system functions properly, it not only helps you feel better physically but also positively impacts your mood and energy levels.

By incorporating small, intentional changes into your daily routine, you can significantly improve how your gut processes food, absorbs nutrients, and manages stress.

In the following steps, we'll dive deeper into five actionable ways to enhance your gut health, from eating the right foods to managing stress and sleep, all while providing a clearer understanding of what it takes to maintain a healthy digestive system. Our intention is to help you make lasting improvements to feel your best inside and out!





# KEY #1: CHOOSE AN INTESTINAL FRIENDLY DIET

## Focus on Fiber

Fiber is crucial for good digestive health. It helps food move through the digestive system, promotes regular bowel movements, and prevents constipation.

Foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes are excellent sources of fiber. Soluble fiber (found in oats, apples, and beans) can help bulk up stools, while insoluble fiber (found in whole grains and vegetables) helps speed up the passage of food.





## Include Probiotics

Probiotics are beneficial bacteria that support a balanced gut microbiome (the total of microorganisms and their collective genetic material present in the digestive tract).

Fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and kimchi are rich in probiotics and help maintain a healthy gut flora.

**Probiotic supplements** are also an option, especially for those with digestive imbalances or after antibiotic use.





## Stay Hydrated

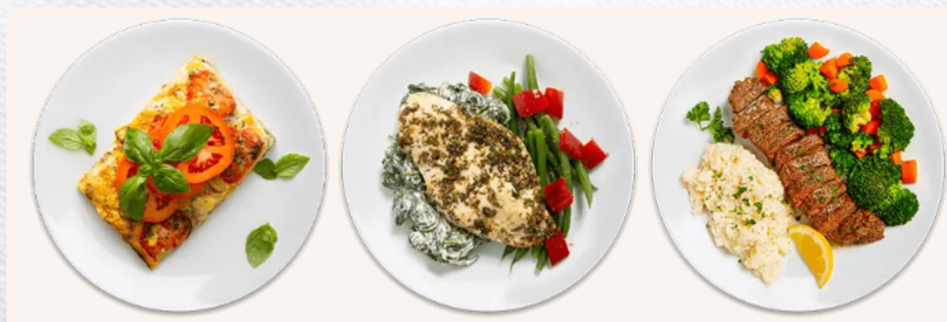
Water is vital for digestion. This really goes without a significant amount of discussion. It helps break down food, absorb nutrients, and prevent constipation by keeping the stool soft.

Aim to drink plenty of water throughout the day, especially with meals. On average, a person should consume about 120 ounces of water daily. Herbal teas and soups can also contribute to your daily hydration needs.

## Low FODMAP Diet for IBS

If you suffer from IBS, a low-FODMAP diet can be particularly effective. FODMAPs are poorly absorbed, highly fermentable sugars that don't completely digest in the small intestine, leading to abdominal pain, bloating, gas, constipation, or diarrhea. These digestive symptoms are typically referred to as **irritable bowel syndrome**.

Avoiding foods high in FODMAPs—such as onions, garlic, and certain fruits—can help relieve symptoms.





# KEY #2: MANAGE YOUR STRESS

## Recognize The Gut-Brain Connection

Your gut and brain communicate through the gut-brain axis, and this means emotional stress can directly impact your digestive system.

Managing stress is easy to talk about, but difficult to actually accomplish. When you're stressed, the body's "fight or flight" response can slow digestion, leading to discomfort, cramps, or IBS flare-ups.

It's important that you recognize this connection and understand that it is key to managing gut health.





## Incorporate Stress-Relief Techniques

Stress management is essential for keeping your digestive system balanced.

Practices like deep breathing, yoga, and meditation can relax the nervous system and support healthy digestion. My favorite technique involves finding my favorite chair, removing my shoes, eliminating all distracting sounds (like my cell phone), closing my eyes, breathing slow and deep - in through my nose and out through my mouth. Doing this for 10-15 minutes works for me.

Even taking a few minutes each day for mindfulness can reduce stress and improve gut function.







## Regular Exercise

Exercise not only boosts your mood but also aids digestion. Physical activity stimulates intestinal contractions, reducing the risk of constipation and improving overall gut motility.

Activities like walking, swimming, or yoga can help keep both stress and digestion in check. Personally, sit ups and push ups fit my morning schedule best. I spend about 15-20 minutes exercising each morning followed by a shower then off to work.

The key word here is regular exercise. Most trainers will tell you that you should spread exercise routines evenly over 4-5 days.





# KEY #3: GET ENOUGH SLEEP

## Rest and Digest

Sleep is a time when your body repairs and regenerates, including your digestive system.

Poor sleep can disrupt the production of hormones like cortisol, which affects how your gut functions. Aim for 7-9 hours of restful sleep each night to allow your body to heal and maintain digestive balance.

## Avoid Late-Night Eating

Eating right before bed can overload your digestive system and prevent proper digestion while you sleep.

Try to finish eating at least 2-3 hours before bed to give your body time to process food and avoid issues like acid reflux or indigestion.

My approach is simple. I eat a complete and health focused mid-day meal and then only consume a small amount at evening mealtime. My favorite evening meal is a turkey and cheese sandwich.





## Sleep Hygiene Tips

To support a good night's sleep, stick to a consistent sleep schedule, limit screen time before bed, and create a calming bedtime routine.

This can include reading, light stretching, or meditation. A dark, cool, and quiet sleep environment also encourages better rest.

I like to monitor what I call my “sleep parameters”. They include more than consistent timing.

I like to monitor my total sleep time. This reflects the amount of time I spend in light, REM, and deep sleep. Most adults need 7-9 hours of sleep to perform well and stay healthy, but the amount needed can vary from person to person. I seem to function best when I get about 6 hours total sleep.

I also check my sleep efficiency. This is a reflection of the percentage of time spent asleep compared to the time spent awake while in bed. I function best with 85% sleep time and 15% awake. Most people experience about 80% of peaceful and uninterrupted sleep.





# KEY #4: IDENTIFY AND ELIMINATE FOOD TRIGGERS

## Common Triggers

For many people, certain foods can worsen digestive issues. Lactose intolerance affects many people, causing bloating, gas, and diarrhea after consuming milk, cheese, or other **dairy products**.

**Gluten**, found in wheat, barley, and rye, can trigger symptoms in those with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity, leading to bloating, cramping, and digestive discomfort. **processed foods, caffeine, and fatty or fried foods** are common culprits.

**High-fat foods** can slow down digestion, leading to bloating, cramping, and diarrhea in some individuals, particularly those with sensitive digestive systems.

**Sugar substitutes** like sorbitol and xylitol can be difficult to digest and may cause bloating, gas, or diarrhea, especially in large quantities.

**Caffeine and alcohol** can irritate the gut lining, exacerbate acid reflux, and cause digestive upset, particularly in people with IBS or acid reflux.

Identifying your specific food triggers starts with understanding how your body reacts to different foods. Keeping a food journal is an effective way to track your meals and the symptoms you experience.





## Track Your Diet

Write down what you eat and drink, including snacks and condiments. Be as specific as possible about ingredients and portion sizes.

After each meal, jot down any symptoms you experience, such as bloating, gas, cramps, diarrhea, or constipation. Include the timing of symptoms as well, since reactions can occur immediately or even hours after eating.

Over time, you'll start to see patterns between what you eat and how you feel. For example, if you consistently experience bloating after eating dairy, it might suggest lactose intolerance.

Once you identify potential triggers, try eliminating them from your diet for a few weeks. Slowly reintroduce each food one at a time, and observe how your body reacts. This helps confirm whether a specific food is causing your symptoms.





## Food Sensitivity Testing

In some cases, it may be helpful to pursue food sensitivity or intolerance testing. These tests, often conducted through blood work or elimination protocols, can reveal underlying sensitivities that might not be obvious through regular tracking.

For example, some people may have mild intolerances to certain foods (like eggs or soy) that cause low-grade inflammation and digestive discomfort without severe, immediate symptoms. A healthcare professional can help you determine if this type of testing is appropriate.





# KEY #5: SUPPORT YOUR GUT WITH SUPPLEMENTS

## Probiotics and Prebiotics

Probiotics are the good bacteria your gut needs for healthy digestion. You can find them in foods like yogurt, sauerkraut, and kombucha, or take them as a supplement.

Prebiotics, on the other hand, are fibers that feed these beneficial bacteria. Foods like garlic, onions, bananas, and whole grains are rich in prebiotics.

## Digestive Enzymes

Some people, especially those with IBS or other digestive conditions, may not produce enough digestive enzymes to break down food properly. Taking digestive enzyme supplements can help break down proteins, fats, and carbs, making digestion easier and reducing discomfort after meals.

My favorite product here is TM3's Green Smoothie. It is a synergistic formula of concentrated alkaline supergreens, superfruits, and nutrient-dense vegetable powders. A valuable source of naturally occurring phytonutrients, vitamins, and minerals, it helps boost energy, assist with mineral replenishment, provide optimal support for the body, and help the body to maintain a healthy pH balance.







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## Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Omega-3s, found in fish oil or flaxseeds, are anti-inflammatory and can help reduce inflammation in the gut.

Chronic inflammation in the digestive system can contribute to IBS and other gut issues, so including omega-3-rich foods or supplements can support gut health.





# CONCLUSION

Improving your gastro-intestinal health is a journey that involves small but impactful lifestyle changes. By focusing on a gut-friendly diet, managing stress, getting enough sleep, identifying and eliminating food triggers, and supporting your gut with the right supplements, you can take control of your digestive health and experience long-term relief.

These five keys provide a strong foundation to help you feel better from the inside out, ensuring your gut stays balanced, energized, and resilient. With consistency and mindfulness, you'll not only improve your digestion but also enhance your overall well-being.

