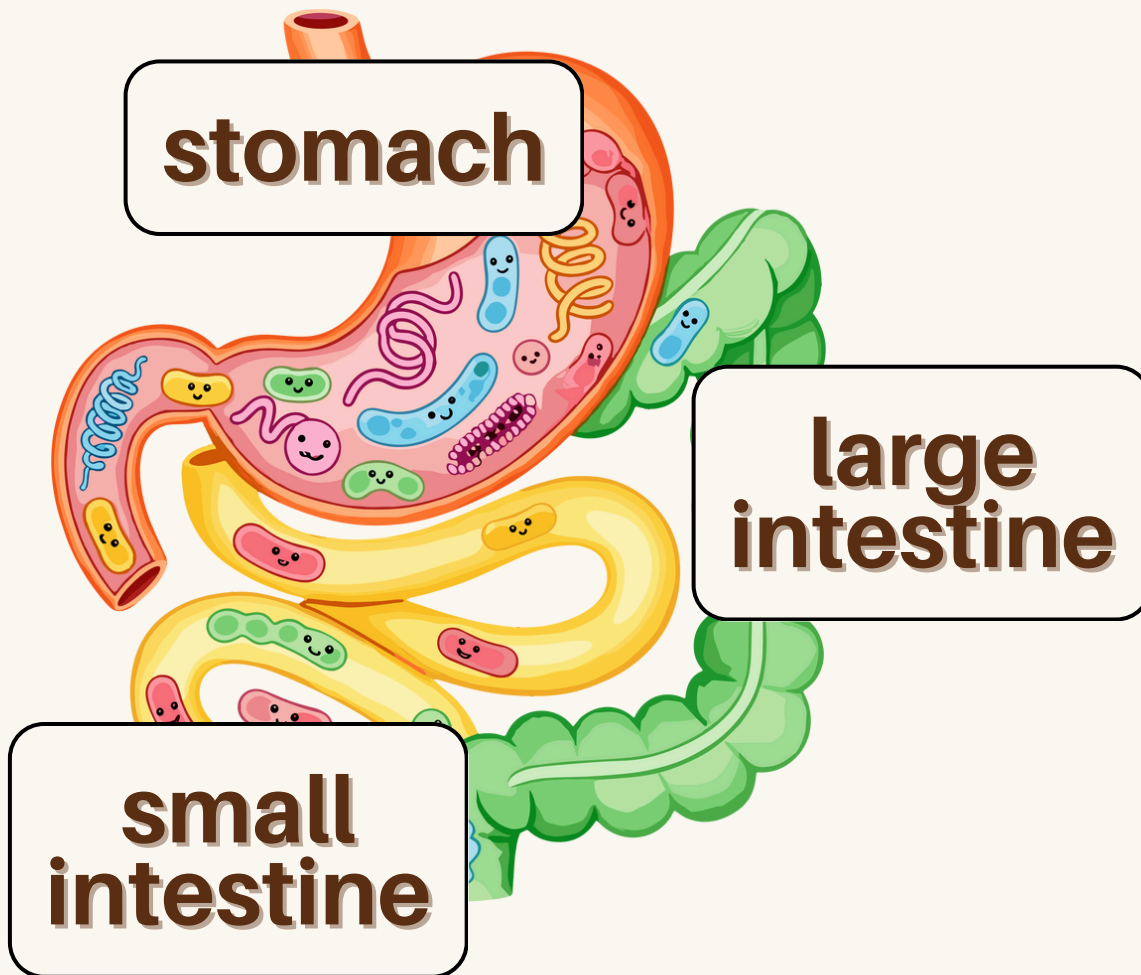


# Eat well, feel well

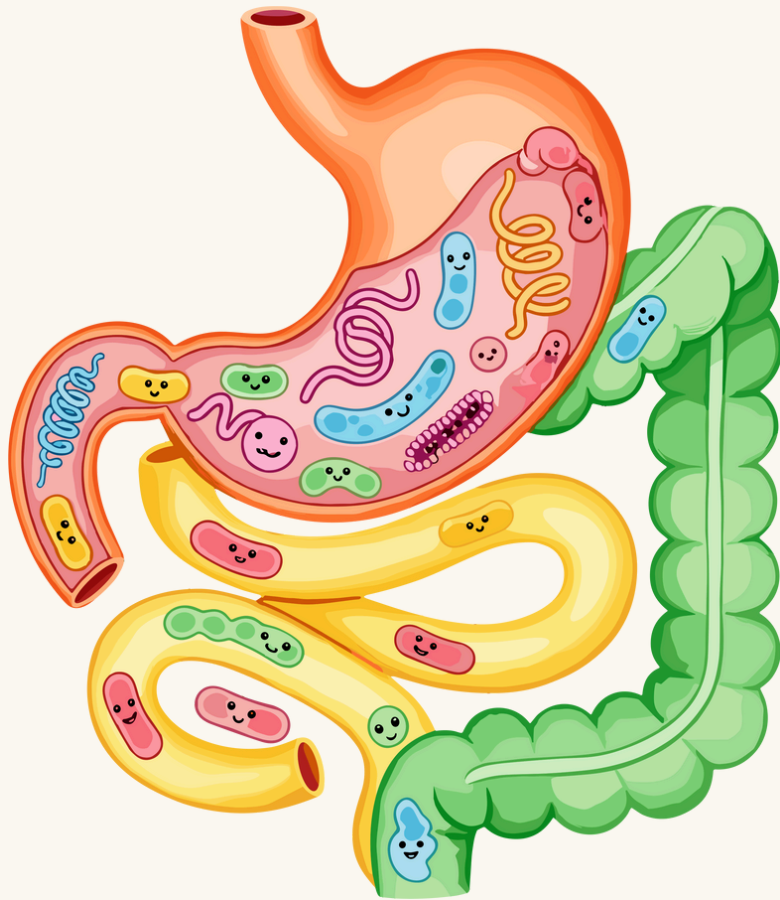
Alisa Lau  
Dietitian



# An introduction to the gut



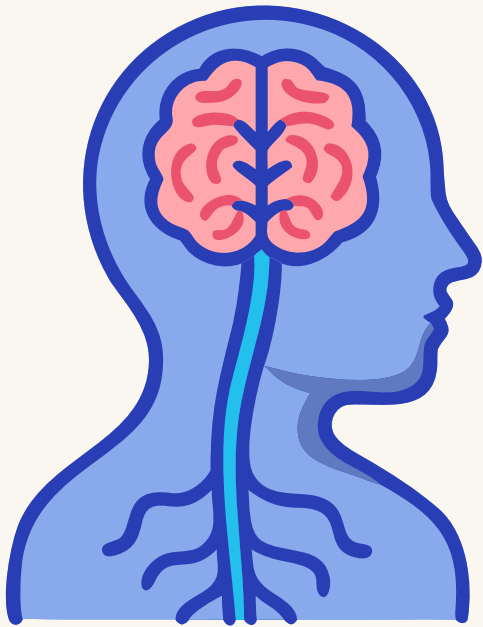
# An introduction to the gut



Digestion of  
food

Home to  
millions of  
bacteria

# The brain and central nervous system



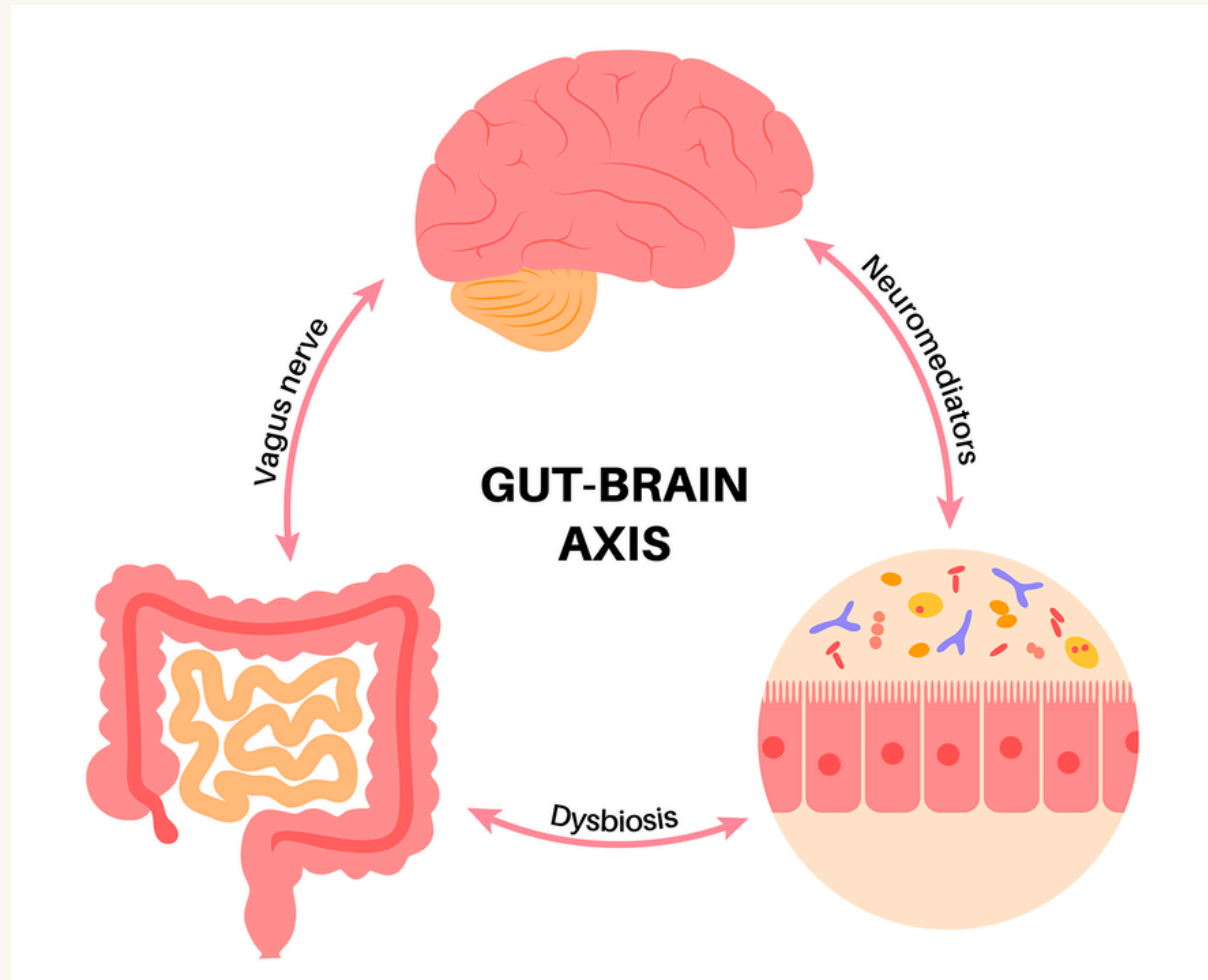
- Controls our thoughts and feelings
- Receives signals from other parts of the body
- Chemicals called **neurotransmitters** help the body and brain communicate



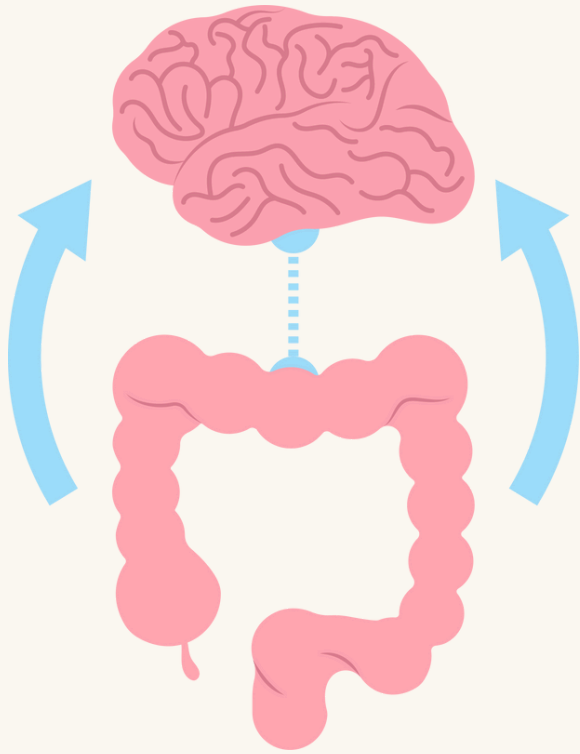
**Serotonin** is a neurotransmitter that regulates **mood, emotion,** the sleep cycle and digestion.

**Did you know?**

About **95%** of our body's **serotonin** is made in the gut, and the **majority** of serotonin receptors are found in our **intestinal cells.**



- A physical connection (fight or flight vs rest and relax)
- Immune responses
- Gut hormones and regulation of wellbeing



The gut doesn't  
**control** our mood.

It **influences**  
signalling.

# The gut microbiome



- **Trillions** of microorganisms including viruses and **bacteria** live in our gut!
- They help us to **digest** our food and **break down food components** our body can't digest on its own
- Some of these bacteria produce or influence the production of neurotransmitters
- Some produce **beneficial** substances which nourish the gut, help with immunity and aid in metabolism

# Nourishing the gut



- **Fermented foods** contain beneficial bacteria, or **probiotics**
- Examples: kimchi, natto, miso, tempeh, yoghurt, kefir, kombucha
- Adds more good bacteria to your gut

*\*\*\* Look for 'live cultures' when buying packaged products*

# Nourishing the gut

- The bacteria need to eat, too!
- **Fibre** from fruits, vegetables, wholegrains, legumes (nuts and seeds) nourish the good bacteria
- Compounds produced by the bacteria indirectly affect neurotransmitter production





# Serotonin-boosting foods



- **Tryptophan** is an amino acid used to make serotonin
- Bacteria respond to the presence of tryptophan and can **increase** the **production** of serotonin
- Eggs, dairy, nuts and seeds (including soy), and oats are good sources of dietary tryptophan

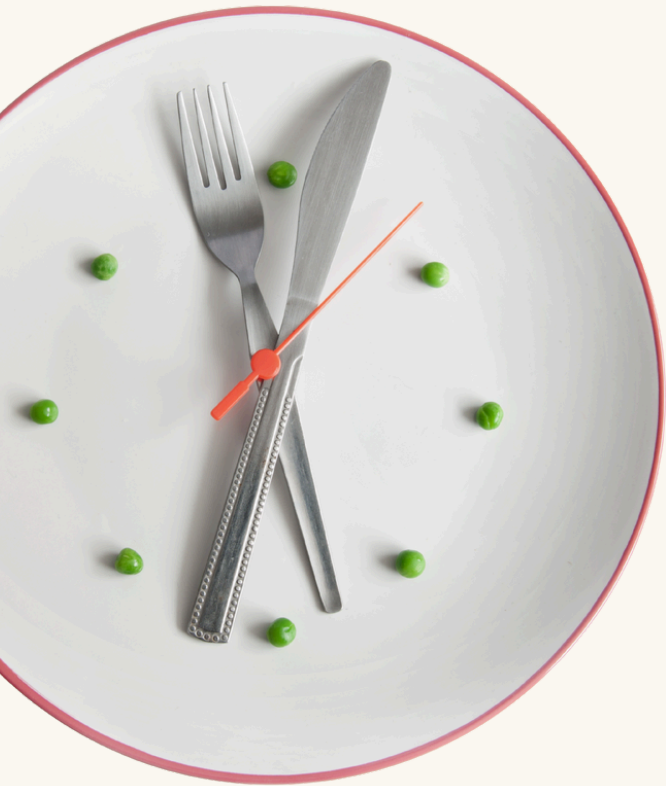


# Ultraprocessed foods



- Ultraprocessed foods usually contain high amounts of **salt, fat, added sugar** and **flavour enhancers**
- Overconsumption of these hyper-palatable foods can lead to the increased production and release of **dopamine**, a neurotransmitter associated with **reward** and **pleasure**
- Long term consumption of ultraprocessed foods alters the composition of the gut bacteria
- These foods are linked with increased inflammation

# Meal timing



- **Regular mealtimes** keep your blood sugar stable
- Helps you focus on tasks you need to complete
- Skipping meals may make you feel more irritable, fatigued, and lead to cravings

# Relax!



- **Sit down** while eating, and eat carefully and mindfully
- Rushing activates the fight or flight (**stress**) response
- This slows down digestion and can cause bloating, discomfort and even poor appetite or irregular eating



**Micro digestive  
reset**

# Add, not restrict



Instead of thinking about foods you need to **cut out**, think about foods that you can **add** to your regular diet.

*Restriction can lead to feelings of cravings*

# Foods to add



## Nuts

A handful (30g) daily

*Choose plain instead of flavoured or salted varieties*

## Legumes

1 serving = 3 heaped tablespoons

## How to add?

Swap an ultra-processed snack for a handful of nuts

Add beans (kidney beans, chickpeas) to salads

Incorporate local varieties like tempeh into your meals



# Foods to add



## Vegetables

3 servings a day

*1 serving = 2 cups of raw or uncooked veggies, or 6 tablespoons of cooked veggies*

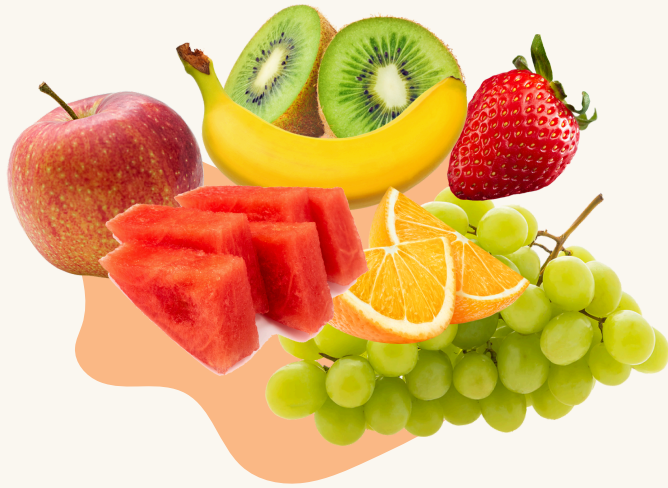
## How to add?

Add a vegetable dish to your main meal

Order vegetable dishes when eating out

Request for extra veggies in dishes

# Foods to add



## Fruits

2 servings a day

*1 serving = a medium sized apple or orange, or a small bowl of cut fruit*

## How to add?

Choose fruit as a snack

Eat a serving of fruit during your main meal

Add dried fruits to cereals or salads

# Foods to add



## Wholegrains

Half of your carbs from wholegrains

*Oats, brown rice, brown pasta, corn, wholemeal flour and products*

## How to add?

Mix brown and white rice before cooking

Opt for wholemeal options

Look for high fibre options

# Reframing how we think about food

Instead of **good** and **bad**,  
think in terms of

**'everyday'** foods

(food that we need daily to **nourish** our bodies)

and **'sometimes'** foods

(part of variety and **enjoyment**)

# Moderation

doesn't mean tiny portions.

It is about **frequency** and **context**.

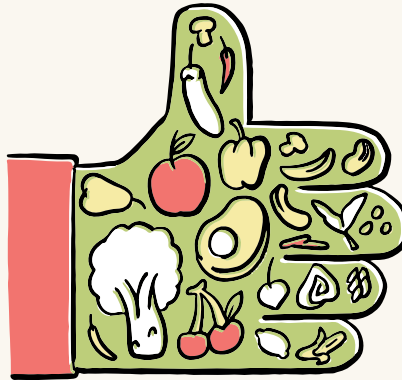


**What is one new  
food habit you  
would like to try  
from today?**





**Food variety  
supports mood,  
health and  
wellbeing**



**Add, not restrict**



**Practice intention  
and mindfulness  
when eating**

# Thank you!

## References

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