



Buzz, Body & Bites

A newsletter for actively aging adults

Virginia Cooperative Extension Family & Consumer Sciences

March 2025

Healthy Gut Healthy Body

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, a time to reflect on your 'gut'. How healthy is your gut? What steps can you take to make it healthier? Have you had your gut checked? But first --- what is the gut? Also known as the gastrointestinal tract, the gut is composed of your mouth, esophagus, stomach, small and large intestine, and the trillions of microorganisms living inside the intestines. A healthy gut refers to the condition of the digestive system, as well as the balance and diversity of microorganisms. Having a healthy gut is important for the prevention of colorectal cancer, but also for your overall health. Research has shown that the health of your gut impacts your immunity, level of inflammation, chronic health conditions, mental health, and more. It also shows that the types of microorganisms living in your gut, known as your microbiome, have a major influence on gut health. These microorganisms are comprised of bacteria, fungi, yeast, and viruses. We consume microbes all the time in our food, and those that escape the gastric acid in the stomach move into the intestinal tract. Your microbiome serves very important functions throughout life. Early in life the microbiome helps infants develop their immune system. Later in life a healthy microbiome serves to improve digestion and nutrient absorption, regulate the immune system, protect against harmful bacteria, reduce inflammation and promote brain health. There is strong evidence that your diet can influence your microbiome in a good way. To promote a healthy microbiome you can:

1. Include enough fiber in your diet. The American Institute for Cancer Research recommends 30 grams of fiber daily to decrease risk for colon cancer. Fiber is good for you in many ways including being food for gut bacteria. Food loaded with fiber include legumes, whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and nuts and seeds.
2. Include fermented foods in your diet regularly. These are foods or beverages made by microbial growth and enzymatic conversion of food components. Common examples are yogurt, sauerkraut, kefir, and kombucha. These fermented foods contain healthy bioactive

compounds, contain nutrients that promote growth of existing gut microbes, and introduce good bacteria into your gut microbiome.

3. Use relaxation techniques like deep breathing to manage stress. Stress increases hormones that impact the gut resulting in gut symptoms like cramping, diarrhea, and constipation.
4. Stay physically active. Being physically active has many health benefits, it can also impact your gut microorganisms.

Contributed by Carlin Rafie, Senior Extension Specialist with Virginia Cooperative Extension

Making Yogurt at Home

Ingredients:

- ½ gallon whole or low-fat milk
- 2/3 cup nonfat dry milk powder (especially recommended if using lower fat milk for thicker consistency).
- ½ cup plain yogurt with live cultures.

Directions:

- Wash your hands.
- Combine milk and powder (if using) and heat over double boiler until mixture is 180F. Maintain temperature for 10-20 minutes.
- Cool mixture until it is between 108-112F.
- Combine 1-2 cups of warm mixture with plain yogurt, and pour yogurt-milk mixture into the remaining milk. Stir to combine.
- Keep the mixture warm for 6 - 8 hours by placing in the oven with the light on, an insulated cooler, a crockpot, or a yogurt maker.
- Refrigerate mixture immediately.
- When fully cooled, portion into containers and enjoy!

April's Favorite Smoothie

This smoothie is nutrient dense and high in fiber. The ingredients below are a suggestion but feel free to make it your own! Play around with portions and add different flavors like peanut butter and banana or vanilla and pumpkin. I also like to add a scoop of protein powder and omit the honey. The oats help thicken the smoothie and add fiber.

Add Spinach!!! You won't even taste it!



Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

www.ext.vt.edu

Ingredients

- 1 cup of mixed frozen fruit
- 1 cup of yogurt or Keifer
- ½ cup of milk or water
- 1 tablespoon Chia seeds
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon oats (any type)
- 1 cup spinach

Instructions:

1. Put the frozen fruit, chia seeds, honey, oats, and Spinach in a blender cup.
2. Add the yogurt and milk or water.
3. Pulse the blender and blend to a consistency you would like your smoothie.
4. Enjoy!

Sitting Twist

This is a simple exercise to strengthen your Abs even while sitting in front of the TV or computer!

1. Sit with your back straight and bring your hands behind your head with elbows bent out to each side.
2. Slowly rotate your torso to the left and hold for a moment.
3. Then rotate right and hold for a moment.
4. Repeat 10 or more times.

Resources

American Institute for Cancer Research Diet, the Microbiome, and Colorectal Cancer:

Connecting the Dots www.aicr.org/resources/blog/diet-the-gut-microbiome-and-colorectal-cancer-connecting-the-dots/

Colorectal Cancer Alliance <https://colorectalcaner.org/>

National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable <https://nccrt.org/>

Editors: April Payne, MS; Carlin Rafie, PhD, RD; Kristen Gibson, MBA
Peer reviewers: Susan Prillaman, MS; Naida Young, MS

Subscribe at: buzzbodybites-g@vt.edu

Visit Virginia Cooperative Extension: ext.vt.edu

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, sex (including pregnancy), gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law.