



Your Digestible Guide to Gut Health

A thriving microbiome can help you feel clear, grounded, healthy, and whole. Here, Dr. John Douillard's Ayurvedic-inspired advice for creating the right conditions for optimal gut health.

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John Douillard, DC, CAP is a globally recognized leader in the fields of natural health, Ayurveda, and sports medicine. He is the creator of LifeSpa.com, a leading Ayurvedic health and wellness resource and store. He is also the founder of the Colorado Ayurvedic Cleanse—a 14-day at-home journey to digestive health and emotional balance.

LifeSpa.com is evolving the way Ayurveda is understood around the world, with thousands of articles and videos joining ancient wisdom with modern science. LifeSpa also hosts online courses on everything from resetting your circadian rhythms to building a meditation practice.

John is also the founder and director of LifeSpa Ayurvedic Clinic, where he sees clients for Ayurvedic consultations.

Learn more at lifespa.com

The Ayurvedic Perspective on Gut Health

The ancient art and science of Ayurveda suggests you address issues at their source.

According to the thousands-year-old holistic health tradition of Ayurveda, the key to maintaining a healthy gut is using kind and gentle therapies to restore an environment conducive for a healthy microbiome.

Ayurveda tells us that a healthy microbiome can lighten your mood, boost your focus, give you energy during the day, and help you access deep sleep at night. Most of today's health concerns, such as indigestion, food intolerances, inflammation, pain, and metabolic issues start as a result of a disturbed intestinal environment and unhealthy microbiome.

Microbes make up 90 percent of the cells in your body, residing in what is referred to as your microbiome.

While microbes can be found on your skin, in your lungs, and pretty much throughout your body, their primary home is your large intestine.

In Ayurveda, your large intestine is also the seat of your nervous system, which means that what affects your mind affects your gut and vice versa.

Ayurveda suggests that 85 percent of all disease is due to digestive imbalance, and that the origin of most of those concerns are in the large intestines. According to a new field in biology, called psychobiotics, the relationship between the gut and the mind is bi-directional, meaning those gut-feelings are real and are constantly modifying our behavior.

Modern-day research also suggests a connection between our gut microbiome and mood. Gut microbes respond to stressful situations and send messages to the brain via the vagus nerve and other pathways. The gut-brain connection is strong. In fact, 95 percent of serotonin—the neurotransmitter associated with being in a good mood—is made in your gut.



An Optimal Environment for a Healthy Microbiome

The environment for these microbes must be precise in order to support optimal health. The epithelium, or skin, that lines the intestinal tract has to be in balance.

If it's too dry, as a result of excess stress or the dry winter months, you may be fighting constipation. If it's too wet, due to chronic stress or irritation from chemical and processed foods, your gut can produce reactive mucus that can result in loose stools. In a sense, the gut lining, like the things Goldilocks likes, has to be just right for the right bugs in the right season to proliferate and regulate your health and immunity.

How do you know when your microbiome is out of balance?

- Food intolerances
- Seasonal allergies
- Weak immunity
- Fatigue
- Pain and stiffness
- Hormonal issues
- Gas and bloating
- Indigestion
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Skin issues
- Cognitive concerns



The Link Between Gut Health, Digestion, and Your Lymphatic System

Plus, the difference mindful eating can make in keeping things running smoothly.

Digestion begins with the first scent of food. When you smell brownies baking, the scent travels through your nostrils and olfactory system to the limbic, or emotional, center of the brain. It's here, with the first scent, that food becomes emotionally charged.

This process triggers the release of digestive enzymes in your mouth, causing you to salivate. In Ayurveda, this initial digestive fluid is called *ahara rasa* (nutrient fluid) and is a mixture of digestive enzymes and *rasa*, or lymph fluid.

Numerous studies have linked stress to the proliferation of undesirable gut bacteria. Ayurveda understood centuries ago that the microbes on the food we eat could carry these stressful impressions.

The attitude we have while cooking or eating a meal can emotionally charge the microbes on the food we eat and carry them into our intestinal tract, sending a message to the microbiome to prepare for either stress or a healthy feeding. Stress is always something to avoid in Ayurveda, but it is particularly important to be relaxed and calm while eating.

Why Mindful Eating Matters

Mindful eating asks you to use all of your senses as you eat, not just your sense of smell.

In Ayurveda, the senses are called avenues of consciousness, which allow us to connect our intelligence and consciousness with the consciousness, or intelligence, of food. This only happens when we eat with our senses wide open and remain aware of every bite.

For example, gobbling food down without acute awareness of its taste will not create a bond between us and the plants or foods we ingest. If our first bites are rushed or mindless, we also rush the digestive process, creating potential indigestion down the road.

In Ayurveda we talk about the importance of how, when, what, and where you eat your food. Of these, how you eat is critical. When eating under stress, the sympathetic (fight or flight) nervous system is sending a message of threat and the digestive system is literally on hold. When we eat in a calm way, the rest and digest parasympathetic nervous system turns on, supporting optimal digestive strength.

The Bad Bugs

Here's how to avoid SIBO and candida

Today, we know many antibiotics and antifungals are indiscriminate and kill beneficial microbes, leaving the door open for the repopulation of bad bugs.

Unfortunately, for centuries, science didn't know how delicate intestinal microbes were. Now, after years of eating indigestible processed foods and enduring heavy-handed therapies and medications, most Westerners have a microbiome lacking diversity and functional intelligence.^{1,4}

This has left us vulnerable to proliferation of numerous intestinal imbalances like indigestion, candida, and small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO).

Watch my podcast on this topic: Troubleshoot Your Intestinal Bacteria, Candida, and SIBO.

5 Major Causes of SIBO and Candida

1. Overuse of medications

Antibiotics and antacids have been shown to negatively alter intestinal bacteria.

2. Weak stomach acid production

Weak stomach acid allows undesirable bacteria to safely enter the small intestine. When there is lack of stomach acid, foods can linger in the stomach and cause more gas and bloating. Without adequate stomach acid to initiate the digestive process, bile is not flowing and intestinal enzymes are not producing, allowing undesirable bacteria to proliferate.²

3. Untreated elimination and gastrointestinal issues

The intestinal skin is like sensitive—it cannot be too dry or too wet; it has to be just right for proper bugs to thrive.²

4. A lifetime of processed + sweetened foods

Processed and packaged foods feed undesirable microbes and disturb a healthy microbiome.^{1,4}

5. Stress

In Ayurveda, stress causes a reverse flow of digestion, called *udvarta*, where there is upward, instead of downward, intestinal pressure. This can damage the ileocecal valve (ICV) and allow large intestinal microbes to migrate into the small intestine. Today, this is called SIBO. Thirty years ago, we called it an open ileocecal valve. ²



4 Ways to Build a Healthy Gut Microbiome

These simple Ayurvedic strategies will help you restore the good bugs

Ayurveda, as well as modern science, tells us that much of our digestive efficiency starts in the mouth. The mouth is where the environment for the healthy proliferation of microbes across the whole intestinal tracts starts. Try the four strategies below to see how they may move the needle on microbiome health.

1. Oil Pulling

The mouth is loaded with microbes—some good and some not so good.

In a healthy mouth, certain microbes play a critical role in upper respiratory health, how your breath smells, and healthy gums and teeth. These good microbes are the first immune response for the entire body.^{2, 3, 4, 5}

But microbes such as *Streptococcus mutans* (the main contributor to tooth decay) and the harmful yeast.

Candida albicans seem to flourish in the mouth—particularly in the presence of sugars and starches. Evidence links common undesirable mouth bacteria like *Streptococcus mutans* to a host of health concerns, including arterial, heart, lung, brain, and blood sugar health.¹⁷

Oil pulling, or the Ayurvedic practice of swishing herbalized oil, has been shown to create a saponification or detergent effect that deters bad bacteria and plaque, while supporting healthy gum tissue, an important barrier against bacterial exposure to the bloodstream. 6, 7, 8, 9 Oil pulling uses lipophilic oils that attract other oils and fat soluble toxic material, pulling them out of your mouth.¹⁶

This amazing ability to pull toxic material, or chelate, has been employed for centuries during classical Ayurvedic detox therapies. And unlike most mouthwashes in the conventional market, oil pulling isn't alcohol based. Alcohol-based mouthwash essentially wipes out both bad and good bacteria.

How Do You Oil Pull?

Uncooked sesame oil, coconut oil, and turmeric are traditionally combined for the most reliable benefits. At LifeSpa, we suggest a product called Swish that contains these ingredients plus a dash of peppermint to freshen your breath.

Take about one tablespoon of this oil mixture and swish or gargle for about 10 minutes a day. It's best to do this in the shower while you are washing your hair or humming your favorite tune. Give it a try!

2. Eat a Seasonal Vata-Balancing Diet

Balancing digestion requires balancing vata, or airy and gassy energy. Vata-balancing foods are warm, cooked foods that have sweet, sour, and salty tastes with healthy oils and higher fat content. Classic vata-balancing foods are available in the winter months (think nuts seeds, whole grains, beets, brussels sprouts, and sweet potatoes), but can be used any time as a temporary diet to balance your digestion.

Vata imbalances can also result in gas, bloating, and occasional constipation. In order to take this type of vata energy, you need to relax, slow down, and enjoy scheduled meal times. People with vata digestive imbalances need to de-stress while eating and have a regular routine or lifestyle to follow. All of this activates the vata-balancing parasympathetic nervous system.

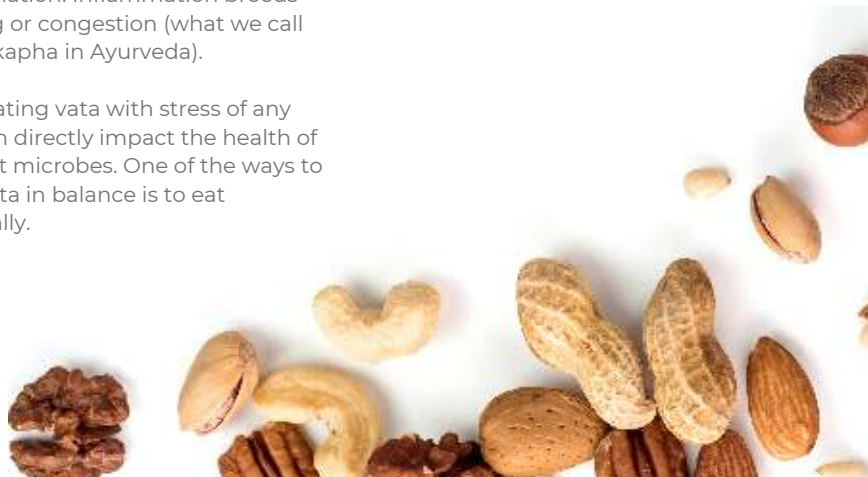
Remember, vata is the seat of the nervous system and located in the large intestine. When vata is out of balance we experience stress, worry, mood, sleep, and elimination issues, as well as internal and external dryness. Vata imbalances can also lead to pitta imbalances, that often lead to inflammation. Inflammation breeds swelling or congestion (what we call excess kapha in Ayurveda).

Aggravating vata with stress of any kind can directly impact the health of your gut microbes. One of the ways to keep vata in balance is to eat seasonally.

There are three primary seasons in Ayurveda, winter (vata season), spring (kapha season) and summer (pitta season). These are based on the three harvests of spring, summer, and a fall harvest for winter eating.

Studies tell us that the microbes in the soil and on our foods change from one season to the next. Research on remaining hunter-gatherer tribes shows that our gut bugs also change from one season to the next.

According to Ayurveda, seasonal eating was the key to healthy digestion and a healthy gut environment. In the winter and early spring we have microbes better equipped to digest protein, fat, and fiber, while in the summer and early fall, microbes that digest carbohydrates naturally proliferate. When we eat a diet of mostly carbohydrates year round, we encourage a stable of gut microbes that are excellent at delivering sugar into our bloodstream, which contributes to our Western epidemic of diabetes and pre-diabetes. By eating seasonally, we change our fuel supply seasonally—from fat each spring to carbs each fall.



3. Try Herbal Support

LifeSpa's Gentle Digest is a classic vata-balancing Ayurvedic digestive formula that combines five spices: ginger, cumin, coriander, fennel, and cardamom.

This formula is designed to reset the coordination of the upper stomach's ability to produce acid, the liver's production of bile, and pancreas and duodenal enzyme production. It can also help address underlying digestive lymphatic issues while supporting a healthy environment for the natural proliferation of beneficial bacteria in the digestive system.

Take one capsule before each meal for two to three days. If there are no results, increase the dose to two capsules before each meal for two to three days. If there is still no change in digestion, increase to three capsules before each meal for five to seven days.

If there are no supportive digestive changes after two weeks, the imbalance may be downstream in the lower part of the small intestine or large intestine, where vata nervous system stress may impact the trillions of microbes that occupy your intestines.¹⁸

4. Use Pre and Probiotics

While the benefits of probiotics were once thought to be restricted to gut and digestive health, new research on the gut-brain axis is connecting our microbiome to brain health, immunity, bone density, blood sugar, mood, and even intuition—and this is the short list.¹⁻²

With regard to balancing the intestinal environment and the microbes that reside there, I would be severely handcuffed if it were not for pre and probiotic formulas that restore balance to the microbiome without creating a dependency on herbs, pills, or powders.⁴

Transient vs. colonizing probiotics

One way of categorizing probiotics is whether or not they are transient or colonizing. The vast majority of probiotics on the market are transient, which means they move through the gut, but do not make a permanent or lasting home in your microbiome.

There are plenty of studies supporting the numerous health benefits of transient probiotics, but once you stop taking them, the microbiome generally returns to its original state.³⁻⁵

Colonizing probiotics, on the other hand, are rare in the marketplace. They actually adhere to the gut wall, become permanent residents, and help microbial diversity. While the science studying our microbes is still in its infancy, it is clear that diversity matters, and Westerners have significantly less microbial diversity than other cultures.⁶⁻⁸

A 4-Step Plan for Perfect Gut Health

Choosing a probiotic or prebiotic can be tricky. Here, the latest science on how to heal your microbiome.

A logical strategy for a probiotic regimen would be to introduce colonizing microbes (see sidebar on Transient vs. colonizing probiotics) into the gut and digestive tract, supporting microbial diversity, and ultimately promoting digestive self-sufficiency.

To accomplish this, I suggest using a specific progression of synergistic pre- and probiotic products, formulated to efficiently create a healthy microbiome. Here is my four-step comprehensive plan for perfect gut health:

Step 1: Prepare Your Gut with a Prebiotic

The journey towards optimal gut health begins with Slippery Elm Prebiotic Formula, composed of organic slippery elm bark, organic marshmallow root, and organic licorice root. These cooling herbs protect, soften, and lubricate the entire intestinal tract, while laying down microbial superfood for a new stable of microbes. This formula is called a prebiotic because it helps create an environment in the gut where good bacteria can thrive, as probiotic cultures feed on the prebiotic.

Use prebiotic soluble fiber to create the best possible environment (read: intestinal mucus membranes) for healthy microbes.

Slippery Elm Prebiotic Formula boils down to make a thick, viscous, soluble fiber taken in tablespoon dosages throughout the day to coat the intestinal lining from top to bottom with a natural prebiotic soluble-fiber slime.

Each of the three ingredients in Slippery Elm Prebiotic Tea naturally lubricate and calm the digestive tract, priming it for introduction of healthy bacteria.

Note: If you have SIBO or candida, using straight soluble fiber is a no-no. Instead, take Slippery Elm Prebiotic Tea with a formula like LifeSpa's Gut Revival. Gut Revival is a colonizing probiotic containing microbes antagonistic to the growth of candida and other undesirable microbes. This one-two punch is the kick-starter you need to shift your gut microbiome back into balance.

Step 1 Directions:

Begin taking Slippery Elm Prebiotic Formula and Gut Revival in conjunction for one month. Take Slippery Elm Prebiotic Formula until you finish the container or for one month (whichever comes sooner). If you feel the Slippery Elm Prebiotic is making a noticeable difference for you and would like to keep taking it in conjunction with more of the following steps, feel free. Sometimes it is needed for a longer period.

Step 2: Introduce Colonizing Probiotics

Introduce healthy, colonizing probiotics that will scrub undesirable microbes and simultaneously make way for beneficial, permanent residents to proliferate. Gut Revival, taken in conjunction with the Slippery Elm Prebiotic Formula, has probiotics that scrub harmful microbes and begin to seed the gut with good microbes. The immune-supportive beneficial bacteria in LifeSpa's Gut Revival (which is my recommendation) include the probiotics *Bifidobacterium lactis* HN019 (15 billion CFU) and a proprietary blend of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* LA-14, *Lactobacillus plantarum* LP-115, and *Bifidobacterium longum* BI-05 (15 billion CFU), as well as *Saccharomyces boulardii* (10 billion live organisms) and arabinogalactan. These components have been shown to survive the digestive tract, which few probiotics have the ability to do.

Not only do they survive the digestive tract, but they adhere to the gut wall, restore healthy flora, and support a healthy microbial environment against unhealthy microbes.

Slippery Elm Prebiotic Formula and the Gut Revival work synergistically to positively impact bad microbes and line the digestive tract with a supportive mucilaginous coating, so that your gut is prepared to be repopulated with the good bacteria.

Step 2 Directions:

Take 1 sachet of Gut Revival in 1-2 oz of pure water, twice a day alongside Slippery Elm Prebiotic Formula. After 1 month, begin move on to Step 3.

Step 3: Boost Colonizing Probiotics

After your gut is primed, boost colonizing microbes to complete the process of achieving thriving microbial diversity.

After finishing the Slippery Elm Prebiotic Formula and Gut Revival and the gut is primed, it's time to repopulate the gut with Flora Restore MAX. This will introduce 100 billion CFU per capsule into the gut, which adhere to the gut wall and proliferate new and lasting residents there. These new residents will then continue to proliferate on their own. Flora Restore MAX has been shown to establish new permanent microbial residents and microbial diversity in the gut through its combination of *Bifidobacterium lactis* HN019 (50 billion CFU), which is the specific probiotic strain that adheres to the gut wall, and a proprietary blend of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* LA-14, *Lactobacillus plantarum* LP-115, and *Bifidobacterium longum* BI-05 (50 billion CFU).

Step 3 Directions:

After finishing the combination of Slippery Elm Prebiotic Formula and Gut Revival, begin taking Flora Restore MAX. Continue taking Flora Restore MAX for 1 month. At this point, begin taking Flora Restore for optimal maintenance of the gut flora.



Step 4: Maintain Gut Health with Flora Restore and Fermented and Seasonal Foods

After creating an optimal gut environment repopulated with healthy microbes by taking Flora Restore MAX, your gut can still benefit from ongoing maintenance.

This can be achieved by taking Flora Restore as necessary, which encourages a long-lasting healthy microbiome. Flora Restore contains *Bifidobacterium lactis* HN019 (15 billion CFU), and a proprietary blend of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* LA14, *Lactobacillus plantarum* LP-115, and *Bifidobacterium longum* BI-05 (15 billion CFU), all of which support and maintain a lasting healthy gut microbiome.

In addition, consider introducing more fermented foods into your diet. Remember, fermented foods create heat and are best consumed in winter. Be mindful not to eat excess fermented foods in summer. Fermented food was traditionally used as a condiment—taken in small amounts with meals.

Plus, don't forget, nature supports a healthy microbiome with its seasonal harvests. Eating seasonally can help you feed good seasonal microbes (yes, they are seasonal, too).

Step 4 Directions:

Once you have completed steps 1-3, begin taking Flora Restore for one month to maintain this new thriving level of healthy flora. Once your microbiome has been reset and the desired health benefits have been achieved, you can wean yourself off of probiotics. But continue a seasonal diet peppered with fermented foods.

How to effectively use probiotics after taking antibiotics

Antibiotics, while helpful in many situations as prescribed by your primary care physician, also have the ability to wipe out healthy gut bacteria.

If you have finished a course of antibiotics, it's important to take probiotics to address microbial diversity. However, it matters when you take each of them.

For optimal results, as soon as you have completely finished antibiotics, take one packet Gut Revival and one capsule Flora Restore Max together each day for about a month (and no more than three months if you require support for a longer period). This is an excellent way to positively impact the gut's healthy microbiome after antibiotic use.

Wishing you a wonderful journey toward establishing thriving microbial diversity!





Try LifeSpa's gentle 14-day Colorado Ayurvedic Cleanse

for a digestive detox and reset that will help you
feel grounded and clear.

Get the support, recipes, stress-relieving practices,
and self-care you need to feel whole again.

Learn more at lifspa.com/colorado-ayurvedic-cleanse

