- Digestion / Digestive system

The harmony of your gut

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INSIDE our digestive system lives a complex community of microorganisms that form an ecosystem — the gut microbiome. This "mini-ecosystem" plays a vital role in maintaining overall health.

These "good guys" influence many bodily functions, from digestion and metabolism to immunity and even mood. No wonder doctors often look to the gut when diagnosing illness.

The gut's population includes bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protozoa. The most common bacteria — Lactobacillus and *ifido bacterium — support digestion and immunity. Viruses known as bacteriophages help regulate bacterial populations, while fungi such as Candida and Saccharomyces assist in nutrient metabolism and immune modulation. Protozoa contribute to nutrient absorption and immune balance.

Together, these microorganisms break down nutrients, produce vitamins, maintain the gut barrier, and even influence mood and cognitive function. This connection explains why what we eat affects how we feel. Each food choice can either nourish or disrupt this delicate ecosystem — a condition known as dysbiosis when imbalance occurs.

Gut health depends largely on lifestyle. Highly processed food, refined sugar, and unhealthy fats can disrupt gut bacteria. Chronic stress, lack of sleep, and infections also play a role. Overuse of antibiotics, while sometimes necessary, can wipe out beneficial bacteria, making probiotic supplementation important. Environmental toxins and certain genetic factors can further affect gut balance.

A healthy gut starts with mindful eating. Follow your mother's advice: eat vegetables, fruits, and high-fiber foods. Fermented options like kimchi, sauerkraut, yogurt, and kefir provide good bacteria. Stay hydrated, sleep seven to eight hours a night, and get enough rest.

Probiotics and prebiotics help maintain balance, especially for older adults, while digestive enzyme supplements can support nutrient absorption. Regular exercise promotes healthy digestion, and soothing teas like chamomile, fennel, ginger, peppermint, and dandelion root can ease the digestive process — best enjoyed warm after meals.

Emotions and gut health are closely linked. Stress, anger, or sadness can disrupt digestion, trigger inflammation, and affect nutrient absorption. Notice how appetite changes when you're anxious or upset? That's your gut responding. Since the brain and gut communicate directly, managing stress supports both mental well-being and digestion. So, don't eat when overwhelmed — calm your mind first.

Lemon water with apple cider vinegar is an easy way to support gut function. It balances stomach acid, reduces bloating, and provides prebiotics that nourish good bacteria.

In one cup of warm water, add the juice of half a lemon and one teaspoon of apple cider vinegar. Drink on an empty stomach and wait 15 minutes before breakfast. Affirmation: Happy me, happy tummy.

Love and light.