



Take Care of YOU

A Health and Wellness Bulletin | January 2024



Gut Health – Part II

When to get a colonoscopy

Average Risk Individuals

For both men and women without pre-existing risk factors, screening for colon diseases is typically recommended starting at age 45.

High Risk Individuals

Individuals with a family history of colorectal cancer or certain hereditary conditions may need to start screening earlier than age 45. The timing and frequency of screenings will be determined with the guidance of a gastroenterologist or other health professional, and may include factors such as the person's age, race, health history, and family history.

Now that we have a better understanding of how the digestive system works, let's talk about some simple ways to improve and maintain gut health. Remember, it encompasses more than just dietary adjustments; adopting certain lifestyle practices will also contribute to a healthy digestion and overall well-being.

One of the most important things we can do for gut health is to stay hydrated; drinking plenty of water supports the integrity of the intestinal lining and prevents constipation. Consuming a high-fiber diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes will promote a diverse gut bacteria profile, as will probiotic-rich foods like yogurt, kefir, and fermented vegetables, and prebiotic sources such as garlic and bananas. If needed, consult with a healthcare professional about the use of probiotic supplements to support gut health. Omega-3 fatty acids found in foods like fatty fish and seeds possess anti-inflammatory properties beneficial for gut health. Reducing processed and sugary foods will positively impact the gut-brain relationship. Moderate alcohol and caffeine consumption, quitting smoking, and avoiding exposure to secondhand smoke are advised to prevent gastrointestinal irritation. Eat smaller meals and chew food thoroughly to aid in nutrient absorption and reduce the workload on the digestive system.

Regular physical activity and quality sleep are both essential for overall health, including digestive function. Aim for 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days, and 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night. Limit antibiotics and NSAIDs and use them only when necessary, as they can irritate the stomach lining and disrupt the balance of gut bacteria. Depression, anxiety, and high levels of stress are all hard on both the mind and body, so practice stress-reducing techniques such as meditation, yoga, tai chi, and deep breathing to positively impact the gut-brain relationship. Lastly, wash your hands regularly, especially before eating and after using the restroom, to help prevent the spread of harmful bacteria that can affect gut health.

Remember to seek personalized advice and guidance from healthcare professionals when making dietary and lifestyle changes or for specific digestive health concerns.