Are you one of the millions of people in the UK suffering from digestive problems?

Feeling nervous or embarrassed and unsure where to turn for help?

Or do you just want to learn how to keep your gut healthy?

Is here to help YOU!

www.loveyourgut.com

See our website for recipes, tips and expert advice

For further information see www.loveyourgut.com, call 020 8839 3258 or email info@loveyourgut.com
The Gut

The digestive system or gut is responsible for processing the food we eat, so that essential nutrients, vitamins and minerals can be absorbed, providing vital fuel for our body. Most of the time it works remarkably well considering the variety of foods that we put into it – but if we are stressed or if we eat too much of any component of our diet, then it may ‘complain’ and we may develop gut symptoms. So understanding how the digestive system works and how to look after it is important.

Using your senses

You can use all five senses to understand how well your gut is working. By looking, listening, smelling, tasting and feeling you may be able to recognise warning signs sooner than you think:

**Sound** – Not eaten for a while? Those rumbles could be your gut looking forward to the next meal by contracting and moving its contents on. Rumbling in the tummy (‘borborygmi’) is also about emotion and can be a giveaway when you are thinking about something you don’t want to talk about.

**Sight** – Stools at the sloppy, loose, pale end of the spectrum often indicate that food is passing through the bowel very quickly and is incompletely absorbed, whereas hard, pellet-like dark stools can indicate hold-up and intestinal spasm. Abdominal distension may well be caused by a combination of eating a diet containing a lot of poorly-absorbed fermentable sugars (FODMAPs – fruit, veg, and in cases milk, etc) causing spasm/hold up.

**Smell** – We all have smelly wind – it relates to what you’ve eaten and the composition of your bacterial flora. Diets rich in protein (sulphur containing amino acids) tend to pass wind with an odour similar to rotten eggs.

**Taste** – Sufferers of acid reflux may experience a sour taste in the mouth caused by regurgitated stomach acid. A metallic taste in the mouth may occur in women at the start of pregnancy, people with bleeding gums, patients taking antibiotics or those with a deficiency of zinc or vitamin B12. Loosely fitting crowns, gingivitis and constipation can all cause a bad taste in the mouth.

**Feeling** – Crampy abdominal pains are often caused by eating too much of the wrong food. Excess fruit, fat or coffee can cause cramping particularly in patients with sensitive bowels or IBS. Severe persistent cramping might rarely indicate a partial obstruction of the intestine, caused by Crohn’s disease or obstruction of the bile duct by a gallstone.
**Diets and Mealtimes**

*Nutritional therapist* Melanie Flower offers top tips on eating for digestive health:

**Be prepared.** The smell of food sends nervous signals from the brain to the gut, causing digestive enzymes to be produced. Cook meals from scratch and the smell of food will prepare the digestive system for what’s to come.

**Chew your food.** Chewing mixes food with saliva, which starts to break down starches. If food is poorly chewed, stomach enzymes and acid in the stomach have to work harder to break it down, which can cause bloating and heartburn.

**Know your limit.** Continuing to eat past the point when you are comfortably full can overload your digestive system with extra food that it will struggle to process. This can cause indigestion, bloating and wind.

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**Exercise**

*Personal trainer* Sophie Christy offers tips and motivation for easy exercise:

**Varying your exercise provides different health benefits.** Combine anaerobic exercise such as weight-bearing exercises with aerobic activities like housework or walking. And flexibility exercises such as yoga and Pilates are great at keeping you supple.

**Modify your everyday routine in order to incorporate more exercise:** walk to the shops or friends’ houses instead of driving, and use stairs instead of escalators. Challenge yourself when doing the housework: can you vacuum more quickly, or polish more vigorously?

**Walking every day can really boost your fitness routine.** But are you getting around enough?

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**Lifestyle**

*Gastroenterologist and psychotherapist* Dr Nick Read shares tips on coping with stress:

**In stressful situations,** adrenalin pumping around the body and the compensatory effects of cortisol can alter the transit of food through the gut, causing either constipation or diarrhoea. Make an effort to consciously de-stress by taking time out to relax.

**Lead a balanced life.** If you can regulate your life, then you will regulate your bowels as well. Take time off - listen to music, take a long bath, read a book, meet friends or go for a stroll.

**Plan ahead.** Don’t let the hectic nature of modern life overwhelm you. Buy a diary and plan your work so that it fits with your home life and social activities. Staying in control can help you to feel calmer about everything.

**Improving your gut health is easier than you think. Start today!**

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Experts recommend taking 10,000 steps a day to avoid leading a sedentary lifestyle, so invest in a pedometer, which will measure the number of steps you take.

**Thirty minutes of exercise, five times a week can seem a little daunting.** But thirty minutes only equates to 3% of your day - now is that so hard to fit in? It doesn’t need to be the same time or activity every day, but do try and fit the time in.

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Looking after your gut is easier than you might think. Take a look at the top tips from our experts on this page – and visit [www.loveyourgut.com](http://www.loveyourgut.com) for more information.
The Digestive Health Assessment has been created by leading gut health experts to help identify digestive complaints. It can be easy to miss signs of possible gut problems. By answering these simple questions you can check your digestive health and see whether it would be wise to seek help.

**Section A**

There has been a persistent change in my bowel habit, which cannot be explained by stress, changing my diet, medications or going away.

I have seen blood on my stools *(motions, faeces)* recently.

I have experienced persistent abdominal pain, which is not related to changing my diet or stress.

I have lost weight *(more than 2kg or 4 pounds)* recently for no obvious reason.

I have lost my appetite and/or feel sick frequently for no obvious reason.

I have had a persistent gut upset associated with symptoms of fever, shivering, sweating and feeling unwell.

**If you have answered Yes to one or more of the questions in Section A, you may have a gastrointestinal condition that requires medical treatment.**

We would strongly advise that you speak with your doctor as soon as possible.

**Section B**

I either open my bowels several times a day or don’t go at all.

My stools can vary from being soft and watery to hard pellets.

I often feel the urge to go but can’t.

Stress often upsets my stomach.

There are so many different foods that upset me; I don’t know what to eat.

As well as abdominal and bowel symptoms, I can feel so tired and get indigestion, muscle pains and lots of other symptoms.

My stomach is so bad, it makes me frustrated and depressed.

The bloating is so bad, I can look as though I am several months pregnant.

**If you have answered Yes to any of these questions and do not have the more severe symptoms in Section A, the chances are that you have IBS.**

For help, please visit [www.theibsnetwork.org](http://www.theibsnetwork.org) and consult *The IBS Self Care Plan.*

If your symptoms do not improve, talk to your GP or practice nurse.

Please turn over and fill in Section C overleaf - Thank you
**Section C**

I rarely eat breakfast

I do not eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day and rarely have cereals for breakfast

I take very little exercise

I sit in front of the television for more than 2 hours every day.

I have put on too much weight.

I rarely go a day without an alcoholic drink.

I smoke cigarettes regularly.

I have very poor quality sleep.

I suffer from stress.


If you have answered Yes to one or more of the questions in Section C, you may want to consider some of the lifestyle changes suggested in this leaflet.

You may also like to take a look at our website [www.loveyourgut.com](http://www.loveyourgut.com) for more information on maintaining good digestive health.

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**Try one of our great recipes today, visit [www.loveyourgut.com](http://www.loveyourgut.com)**

**Blueberry, banana and cardamom pancakes**

* You would not guess it but these pancakes do not contain a grain of flour, yet they hold together really well. They are incredibly easy and quick to make if you have a stick blender or a liquidiser.

**Makes 8 pancakes**

**Ingredients**

- 2 medium sized bananas
- 3 eggs
- ½ tsp ground cardamom seeds
- 150g fresh or frozen blueberries
- ½ tbsp vegetable oil
- maple or golden syrup to dribble

**Method**

Peel the bananas and place them in a tall jug or liquidiser. Add the eggs and ground cardamom and liquidise thoroughly. Stir in 100g of blueberries. Heat a large non-stick frying pan and wipe some vegetable oil around the pan. Pour 2 tablespoons of batter into the pan for each pancake. You should be able to fit four to a pan. Cook the pancakes for 3 minutes or until just set. Flip over and cook for a further two minutes.

Serve the pancakes with extra blueberries, a dribble of syrup and a scattering of desiccated coconut.
Core is the only charity in the UK committed to fighting all digestive conditions. It does this by funding vital research that develops new treatments and saves lives; by providing expert information for people affected, their families and their carers; and by promoting awareness and discussion about digestive health. Visit: www.corecharity.org.uk

The Bowel Disease Research Foundation (BDRF) funds high quality, practical research which improves treatment and survival rates for bowel disease patients across the UK. Founded by some of the country’s leading colorectal surgeons, in recent years we have committed over £3 million to support research into all forms of bowel disease – principally bowel cancer and IBD, as well as conditions like faecal incontinence. A full list of the work we support is available at www.bdrf.org.uk

The Primary Care Society for Gastroenterology (PCSG) is the voice of Primary Care Gastroenterology. We have a (mainly) GP membership and offer advice and guidance on gastrointestinal matters, as well as lobbying and influencing. We hold scientific meetings and have a bi-annual journal ‘The Digest’. Visit www.pcs.org.uk

Bowel & Cancer Research is a registered charity. We fund the best science in bowel cancer and other bowel diseases anywhere in the UK and invest in the next generation of experts with support for PhD students. We involve patients, their loved ones and carers in ours and our partners’ research and work to challenge taboos and break down stigma. Visit: www.bowelcancerresearch.org

St Mark’s Hospital Foundation – funds research, education & dissemination of clinical excellence at St Mark’s Hospital, a world-leading bowel disease specialist. Founded over 180 years ago, St Mark’s is a national referral centre for complex bowel disease cases seeing over 50,000 patients annually from across the UK. St Mark’s vision is of a future free from the fear of Bowel Disease. Visit: www.stmarkshospitalfoundation.org.uk

The IBS Network – is the national charity supporting people living with Irritable Bowel Syndrome. Our mission is to provide information, advice and support and to work alongside healthcare professionals to facilitate self-care. Visit: www.theibsnetwork.org

Love Your Gut and Love Your Gut Week is an initiative of Yakult UK Limited, in association with Core, Bowel & Cancer Research, St Mark’s Hospital Foundation, The IBS Network, Bowel Disease Research Foundation and the Primary Care Society for Gastroenterology.