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Tip for That #10: Integrative Medicine Competency: The Gut Microbiome

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Tip for That #10

Integrative Medicine Competency: The Gut Microbiome

December 30, 2016

Are we more bug than human?

Our gut microbiome contains:

- 10 times as many cells as we have,
- 200 times the amount of DNA as we have,

and has a profound effect on inflammation, the immune system, and ultimately systemic health.

95% of our serotonin is in the gut.

70-80% of our immune system lies in the gut.

It makes sense that gut health plays an important part in overall health.

Studies have shown that people with more diverse microbes in their guts have better health outcomes; those with less diverse microbes tend to have more chronic illness.

Once the gut microbiome has been established, typically within the first four days of life, there are only two known ways to change it for the better:

- Fecal microbial transplant (FMT) and
- Diet

I admit that I have considered FMT for some of my most challenging patients. Though promising for IBS, Crohn's and ulcerative colitis, FMT is currently only indicated for recurring *Clostridium difficile* colitis.

That leaves us with diet. Perhaps you would like a microbiome makeover for the New Year?

Here's how:

- Eat more plant-based foods.
- Increase fiber, especially soluble fiber such as Chia and ground flax seeds.
- Decrease sugar, dairy, and processed foods (including less processed meats).

- Include fermented foods with most meals – real sauerkraut such as Bubbies’, kefir, kombucha, tempeh and kimchi. These foods contain healthy bacteria. Most traditional cultures have included fermented foods in their diets for centuries.

Want to know more?

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/29/well/eat/a-gut-makeover-for-the-new-year.html>
Rabin, RC. A Gut Makeover for the New Year. *New York Times*. Dec 29, 2016.
- <https://www.functionalmedicine.org/conference.aspx?id=3145&cid=0§ion=purchase>
Fasano A. How Early Nutrition Influences Gut Microbiome and Metabolic Profiles in Health and Disease: Shifting From a Disease-Centered Approach to Patient-Oriented Functional Medicine. *Cleveland Clinic Grand Rounds*. Recorded on December 13, 2016.
- <https://commonfund.nih.gov/hmp/overview>
The Human Microbiome Project, United States Department of Health & Human Services, National Institutes of Health.

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- Hadhazy A. “Second Brain” Influences Mood and Well-Being. *Scientific American*. Feb 12, 2010
- Hair M, Sharpe J. Fast Facts about the Human Microbiome. The Center for Ecogenetics and Environmental Health, University of Washington, 2014.

I hope you enjoyed this installment of Tip for That. My intent is to educate and provide quick tips for excellent patient care. I welcome your feedback.

In Health,
Kristen

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