



Disclaimer: I am not a qualified health practitioner. You should always consult a qualified health practitioner if you are sick. Opinions expressed on this website are my own or come from my own experience or research

## What Damages the Gut?

1. We inherit our gut health from our Mother - which is why I suffered with endometriosis, Candida, eczema and eventually alarming breast health. My Mother's microbiome had been destroyed by 2 types of dysentery in her 20s whilst living in India and no-one had heard of gut microflora, probiotics and leaky gut back then.

Luckily, I have managed to deal with all these things through healing my gut, diet, detoxification and supplementation, guided by some excellent natural health practitioners.

2. Stress - adversely affects the gut by reducing gastric motility and secretions, damages the regenerative capacity of the gut mucosa, inhibits enzyme output, HCL (hydrochloric acid in the stomach needed for digestion) and nutrient absorption and has negative effects on gut microflora.
3. Anti-biotics – not only act on bacteria that cause infection but also the resident microbiota. It reduces the abundance of good bacteria as well as diversity and evenness.

Although some bacterial groups recover following anti-biotics, others do not, even after 6 months. And the level of recovery varies between individuals.

Be aware that you are also exposed to antibiotics through the consumption of meat, as animals raised in 'concentrated feeding animal operations' are routinely fed anti-biotics. However, in UK it is good to see that that the government is focussed on reducing the amount of antibiotics given to animals.

4. Drugs – 25-50% of all drugs, including over the counter medications, damage your microbiome in predictable ways. Other drugs inter-act with the microbiome, modifying drug treatment outcomes sometimes in a good way and sometimes in a bad way according to the health and diversity of the gut. This is something that doctors need to become more aware of.
5. Xenobiotics – Recent studies show that xenobiotics such as heavy metals, pesticides, food additives such as artificial sweeteners and flavourings cause gut microbiome toxicity and significant function alterations.



# Zest for Life

6. Not Eating a Diverse Range of Foods – A narrow and limited diet results in poor gut flora diversity. A lack of diversity within the gut bacteria affects the whole body including our ability to fight infection and limits recovery from harmful influences, such as infection or antibiotics. A wide range of healthy, whole, preferably organic food provides nutrients for a diverse number of bacteria to grow.
7. Lack of Prebiotics in the Diet - Prebiotics are a type of fibre that promotes the growth and activity of friendly gut bacteria. Many fruits, vegetables and wholegrains naturally contain probiotics eg, lentils, chickpeas, beans, oats, bananas, Jerusalem artichokes, garlic, asparagus, leeks, onions and nuts.
8. Lack of Sleep – recent studies have shown that lack of sleep negatively affects the gut microbiome
9. Processed Food – can cause inflammation in the lining of the GI tract. The gut may not recognise food such as sugar and high fructose corn syrup, refined carbohydrates, processed oils, artificial trans fats like margarines, excessive alcohol, processed meat, or artificial ingredients and see it as an ‘attacker’.

This sets off an inflammatory response where the body is literally fighting the food we eat which can damage the gut.

10. Alcohol – is absorbed in the upper intestinal tract and enters the liver via the portal vein. Bacteria in the gut help metabolise alcohol. If you have less of this bacteria, it will affect how well your body can detoxify alcohol.

In excess, alcohol can inhibit the production of digestive enzymes and juices meaning it’s more difficult to digest and absorb nutrients.

Excessive alcohol can cause inflammation of the gut which can result in leaky gut causing further inflammation in the body which may lead to food intolerances, auto immune issues etc.

Excessive alcohol may result in bacterial overgrowth, dysbiosis and change in the overall composition of the gut microbiome.

But it’s not all bad news.....Red wine contains powerful polyphenols that your gut flora loves. A systematic study found that red wine had a positive effect on the microbiome but be aware that quantity is key – too much will outweigh the benefits. And it is better to have a glass of red wine with or after a meal and not on an empty stomach.

Can you heal your gut? Yes, you can definitely heal/greatly improve the health of your gut and hence your overall health provided you follow a healthy diet. See my article on Healing the Gut on the page Staying Healthy and Resisting Infection.