

## The Brain-Gut Connection

### The Brain - Gut Connection



When you're stressed the brain sends a signal to the gut

When something's not right with your gut, it sends a signal to the brain



### Boost the gut and brain relationship

**1 Follow a diet that includes fiber**  
Add colorful fruits, vegetables, whole grains, water and probiotics to your meals

**2 Slow down and enjoy your meals**  
It allows time for your gut to tell your brain that you're full and your brain to tell you to relax




Susan Bowerman M.S., RD, CSSD, CSOWN, FAND – Sr. Director, Worldwide Nutrition Education and Training, Herbalife Nutrition

Ever had “butterflies” in your stomach? How about a “gut instinct” or maybe a “gut-wrenching” experience? When a “gut check” tells you how you feel, it’s tempting to think that it’s all in your head. But the truth is, when instincts tell you to “go with your gut,” your gut really is trying to tell you something.


There really is a strong connection between your brain and your digestive tract, and they are in constant communication with one another. An incredible amount of information travels between your gut and your brain – so much so, that the nervous system that resides in your digestive tract is often called the body’s “second brain.”

## The Brain - Gut Connection




When you're stressed the brain sends a signal to the gut

When something's not right with your gut, it sends a signal to the brain



## Boost the gut and brain relationship

- 1 Follow a diet that includes fiber**  
Add colorful fruits, vegetables, whole grains, water and probiotics to your meals
- 2 Slow down and enjoy your meals**  
It allows time for your gut to tell your brain that you're full and your brain to tell you to relax



## The Body's Two Brains

The connection between your brain and the “second brain” in your digestive tract is something you’ve probably experienced in the form of a “gut reaction.” You know the feeling when you get some bad news or have a difficult conversation with someone. Your gut tells you exactly how you’re feeling. When stress or anxiety strikes, your brain sends a signal to your gut – and the next thing you know, you’ve got a churning stomach.

The signals travel in the other direction, too: from gut to brain. This system alerts the “first brain” if you’ve eaten something you shouldn’t have, and also keeps tabs on your hunger level and your mood. When something in your digestive system isn’t quite right, an alert is sent to your brain – often before you even notice that anything is wrong.

## Your Gut and Your Mood

It’s clear that certain emotions can trigger a digestive response, but there is also speculation that the reverse may also be true – conditions in your gut may influence how you feel.

According to Scientific American, recent evidence indicates that not only is our brain “aware” of our gut microbes, but these bacteria can influence our perception of the world and alter our

behavior.

There is no question that your brain and gut are well connected – so it makes sense that keeping your digestive system in tip-top shape is vital to your sense of well-being.

## How to Improve Your Digestive Health

The steps you take to keep yourself healthy are the same ones that promote digestive health, too. Here are some tips to get started:

- Include plenty of fiber from colorful fruits and vegetables and whole grains in your diet. Fibers help promote regularity (which could affect your mood!), and certain fibers also promote the growth of the “good” bacteria in your microbiome.
- Stay adequately hydrated throughout the day.
- Make sure to eat a source of probiotics, Fermented foods, such as yogurt, pickled vegetables, and tempeh, provide natural probiotics that support immune health by crowding out other bacteria that can potentially make you sick.
- Make regular exercise a part of your routine.

Taking time to enjoy your meals helps, too. When you slow down you may eat less food, and you’ll probably be less stressed – which means you’ll be sending signals to “both” your brains. When you eat more slowly, it allows time for your gut to tell your brain that you’re full – and for your brain to tell you that you’re more relaxed, too.