

## Supporting your Gut Health after a Course of Antibiotics



You have been prescribed a course of antibiotics. **It is important that you take them as prescribed to treat your infection.**

However, when you take antibiotics, they can also disrupt the healthy bacteria in your gut. This can lead to digestive issues or make it harder for your body to recover. This can even make you more likely to get other infections in the future.

Here's how you can help support your gut after taking antibiotics:

### **1. Eat a Variety of Plant-Based Foods**

Eating a wide variety of plants is one of the best ways to support your gut health. Plants contain fibre, which is food for the healthy bacteria in your gut. Aim to include:

- **Fruits and Vegetables:** Include a rainbow of fruits and vegetables in your meals, such as leafy greens, berries, apples, carrots, and broccoli.
- **Whole Grains:** Choose whole grains like oats, brown rice, quinoa, and whole wheat instead of refined grains (like white bread and white pasta). Whole grains provide fibre and nutrients that help keep your gut bacteria balanced.
- **Legumes and Beans:** Beans, lentils, chickpeas, and peas are rich in fibre and help feed your gut microbiome.

### **2. Limit Sugar and Refined Grains**

Sugar and processed foods can cause harmful bacteria in the gut to grow, disrupting the balance of good bacteria. It's important to limit:

- **Sugary Snacks:** Cut back on candy, cookies, and sugary drinks.
- **Refined Grains:** Avoid white bread, white pasta, and other foods made with white flour. Instead, opt for whole grain versions.

### 3. Reduce Meat Intake

Too much meat, especially red and processed meat, can negatively affect your gut microbiome. Instead of large servings of meat, try to:

- **Include Plant-Based Protein:** Beans, lentils, tofu, and tempeh are excellent sources of protein.
- **Swap other meat for fish:** If you eat animal products, fish, like salmon can be a good choice because it has healthy fats.

### 4. Fermented Foods

Fermented foods are rich in healthy bacteria (probiotics) that can help restore balance to your gut after antibiotics. Some examples include:

- **Yoghurt** (with live cultures)
- **Sauerkraut**
- **Kimchi**
- **Kefir**
- **Miso** and **tempeh**

Fermented foods are a natural way to add good bacteria to your gut. But, **if you are on chemotherapy or strong immunosuppressive medications, you should avoid fermented foods and food with live cultures** as they contain live bacteria that could be harmful in these situations.

### 5. Probiotics: Helpful or Not?

Probiotics are supplements containing live bacteria that can help restore balance to the gut. However, not all probiotics are the same and the evidence on how helpful they are is mixed. Some studies suggest that taking a probiotic supplement may even delay how quickly your healthy bacteria recover. There is not enough evidence to make a clear recommendation on this at the moment.

#### **Possible benefits of Probiotics:**

- May help restore healthy bacteria in the gut
- Can reduce the risk of diarrhoea after antibiotics

#### **Possible downsides of Probiotics:**

- Not all probiotics are the same, and some may not be effective or even delay restoring healthy bacteria
- The research on probiotics is still limited for many strains
- Some people may experience gas or bloating when starting probiotics

You can read more about probiotics here: [Do Probiotics Help After Antibiotics?](#)

## 6. Other Tips for Gut Health

- **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water to help your body recover.
- **Exercise:** Regular physical activity helps improve gut health and overall well-being.
- **Get Enough Sleep:** Sleep is important for your immune system and overall health, which includes supporting your gut.

### **Further Advice**

Supporting your gut after antibiotics is all about eating a wide variety of healthy foods, focusing on plants, limiting sugar and processed foods, and including fermented foods if possible. If you're on chemotherapy or strong immunosuppressive drugs, avoid fermented foods. Probiotics may help, but the evidence is still evolving, so this can't yet be recommended.

By making these changes, you can help your gut recover and maintain a healthy balance of good bacteria.