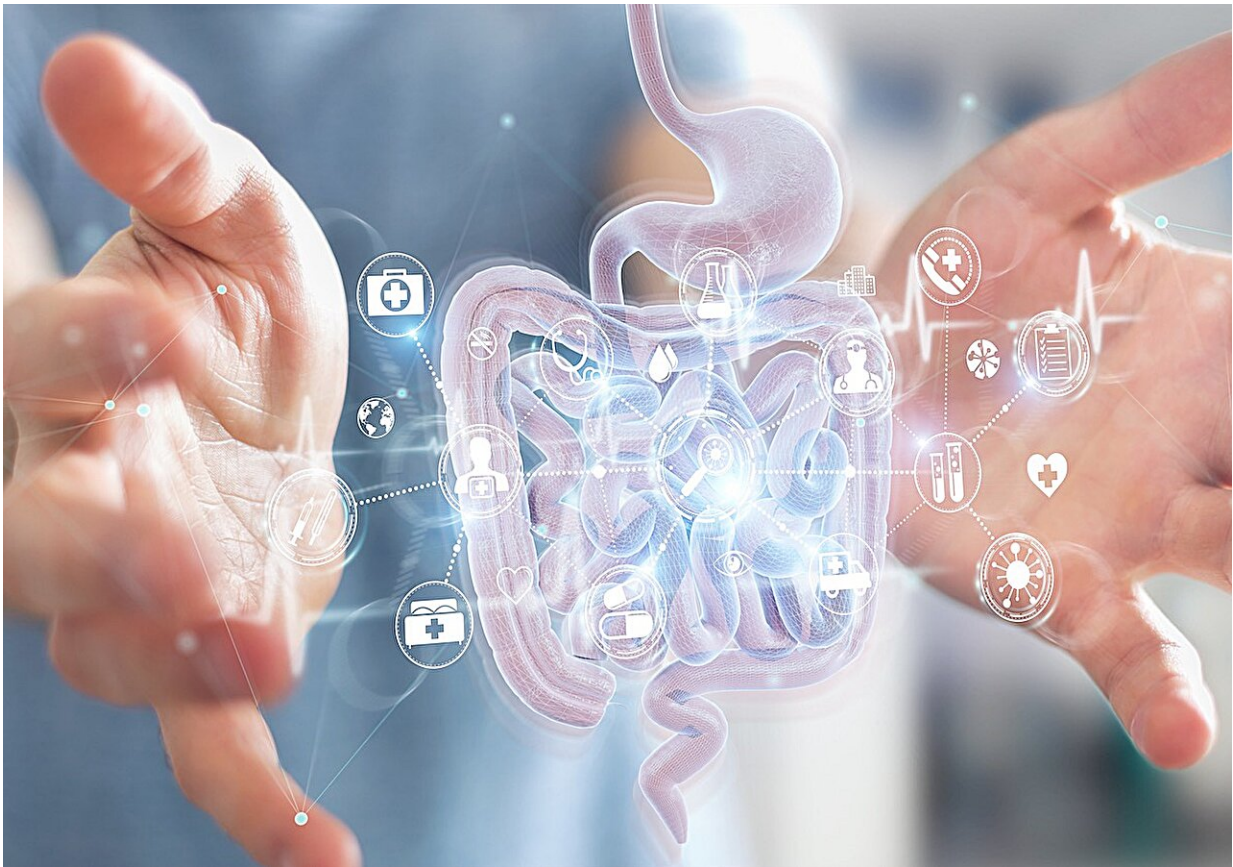


Four tips to keeping your gut healthy and free of IBD

August 6 2024, by Ernie Mundell



Almost [2.4 million Americans](#) are thought to suffer from the pain and disability of inflammatory bowel disorder (IBD), a type of autoimmune

illness that includes ulcerative colitis and [Crohn's disease](#).

You can avoid adding to that number by following a few simple steps to a healthy gut, said Dr. Victor Chedid, a gastroenterologist and IBD expert at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

He broke these tips into four basic categories:

Eat right

The optimum dietary plan for your gastrointestinal system is one already lauded by nutritionists for heart health and [weight control](#): The [Mediterranean diet](#), Chedid said. Dietary fiber is crucial: try to take in 30 to 40 grams daily. The Mediterranean diet includes lots of gut-healthy foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds, as well as olive oil.

Get active

Exercise isn't just for healthy hearts, muscles and lungs; it can keep your immune system and digestive tract in shape, too. Chedid recommends incorporating exercise into your everyday life, trying whatever form of activity suits you best.

Maintain mental health

The brain influences the gut and vice-versa, and stress can have a big impact on the gut, Chedid said. He pointed to data showing that risks for [irritable bowel syndrome](#), [functional dyspepsia](#), pelvic floor dysfunction, constipation and other gastro issues are more likely in folks that have faced trauma in childhood or later in life.

Stay hydrated

Water sustains and lubricates the digestive tract, and Chedid recommended everyone drink at least 64 ounces (8 cups) per day for optimum gut health. Water is crucial to "staying regular," he noted, and is especially important in hot seasons or climates.

"Paying attention to all these factors is essential for maintaining gut health," Chedid said in a Mayo news release.

If you are unfortunate enough to develop IBD, treatments are out there, Chedid said.

While there's no cure for the disease, surgery and a wide variety of medications—[anti-inflammatory drugs](#), immune system suppressors, biologics, antibiotics—can help push it into remission.

Some patients will experience common IBD symptoms like diarrhea or even rectal bleeding, and the stigma around those issues can keep them from seeking help, Chedid said. That's where a loved one can step in to offer support.

"It's about being there for them, recognizing that they're not always going to be themselves at all times," Chedid said. "There will be times when they feel down, are in pain or don't want to eat what you cook. Don't be offended. You just need to be there for them."

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