

# Is Your Gut Affecting Your Mood?

The link between anxiety, depression, irritability, brain fog and your gut



Are you experiencing problems with your mood such as anxiety, irritability, or depression? Or maybe you're experiencing problems concentrating or thinking clearly, a problem commonly called brain fog. If so, you might be surprised to learn that these problems may be originating in your gut, i.e., your intestinal system.

Your intestines have their own nervous system, called the enteric nervous system, which produces many neurotransmitters that influence your thoughts and feelings. For example, more serotonin is produced in your intestine than is produced in your brain. We intuitively acknowledge that there's a gut brain when talking about gut instincts or gut feelings. Your gut doesn't communicate with thoughts, but through emotions and sensations like butterflies or a knot in the stomach.

## The Vagus (or Vagal) Nerve

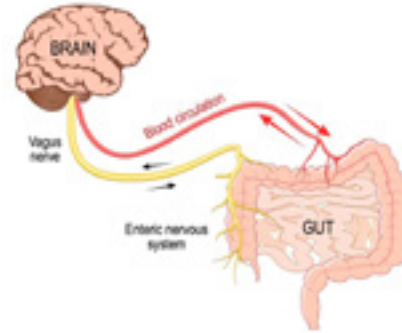
The vagus nerve is the primary nerve in the parasympathetic nervous system and controls things like swallowing, heart rate, coughing, digestion, intestinal motility, and bowel movements. But it doesn't just send signals from the brain to the gut, it is part of the gut-brain connection. A connection that sends more messages from the gut to the brain, than the brain to the gut.

Vagus nerve irritation or weakness of the intestinal membranes, toxins in the GI tract, an imbalance in intestinal microflora, and parasites will all cause your gut to send signals through the vagus nerve to the brain that say "Pay attention! There's a problem down here!" So, if you're suffering from frequent indigestion, gas, bloating, poor digestion, and chronic constipation and you're also experiencing problems with your mind and mood, they are probably connected.



## Gut Neurotransmitters

There's another connection between the brain and the gut and that connection is the blood stream. The enteric nervous system in the intestines produces numerous transmitters that travel through the bloodstream to influence the brain. For example, the intestinal tract produces more serotonin, the neurotransmitter associated with self-esteem and positive emotions, than the brain.



So, when do you know if your gut-brain connection needs help? Anxiety, irritability, depression, and brain fog are all potential signs that your brain is suffering from problems in your gut. And, if you have chronic problems with digestion, such as sugar cravings,

food allergies, acid reflux, acid indigestion, belching, bloating, flatulence, and constipation, you definitely need to work on your GI tract. Other indications that you need to work on your gut-brain include difficulty swallowing, heart palpitations, high blood pressure, shallow breathing, and autoimmune diseases.

## Supporting the Gut Brain Axis

A colon cleanse is the best way to start healing your gut. If the root cause of your health problems is in your gut, you should start feeling better both physically and emotionally after doing a cleanse. People typically have more energy, less pain, lighter and more positive emotions, and clearer thought processes after a cleanse.

Another way to help improve the health of your guts is to improve the quality of your friendly flora, the microbes that live in your intestines. Known as probiotics, these friendly microbes contribute to your physical and emotional health. Supplementing with probiotics will help crowd out the unhealthy microbes that weaken your immune system, cause cravings for sugar and junk food, and adversely affect your mind and mood. Probiotics can be taken as a supplement or by eating fermented foods, especially fermented vegetables like sauerkraut or kimchi.

You can also directly support the vagus nerve. Herbs such as St. John's wort, chamomile, catnip, peppermint, and fennel can all help regulate the vagus nerve and may help you experience both better digestion and a better mood.

## Selected References

*Gut: The Inside Story of Our Body's Most Underrated Organ* by Giulia Enders

*The Vagus Nerve Gut Brain Connection* by Wendy Hayden

[https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/gut-brain-connection#TOC\\_TITLE\\_HDR\\_2](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/gut-brain-connection#TOC_TITLE_HDR_2)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-brain-body-connection/202108/understanding-the-gut-brain-connection>

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