



## Good Gut Health

The QCWA has long been focused on improving the health and wellbeing of women across Queensland. Each year they strive to achieve this through their Health Awareness Topics. Branches and divisions are encouraged to facilitate meetings, seminars, events and other such occasions where guest speakers and professionals are invited to provide informative talks and build awareness in local communities across Queensland about their chosen health topic. In 2019, the QCWA's Health Awareness Topic was Crohn's and Colitis. To assist this appeal, Country Kitchens created a Good Gut Health guide and resources to help facilitate Health Awareness events in branches and communities.

Emerging research has shown that an alteration in the good and bad bacteria that make up our gut microbiome is a large factor contributing to inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn's and Colitis and Irritable Bowel Syndrome. Our gut microbiome is made up of millions of bacteria that line our gastrointestinal tract. A diet high in saturated fat and processed sugar can disrupt the balance between the good and bad bacteria, tipping it in favour of the bad bacteria which has been associated with symptoms such as excess gain, bloating and abdominal pain.

Consuming a diet that aligns with the Australian Dietary Guidelines ie. a diet that is high in plant-based fibre, is the best way to achieve good gut health. Studies show that people who eat more fibre have a more diverse microbiome which is beneficial for gut health. Fibre is the indigestible part of plants which is required to keep the digestive system healthy. There are three types of fibre that should be included in your diet:

Type of fibre	Benefits	Food Sources
Soluble	Helps manage blood cholesterol and blood glucose levels, helps restore good bacteria and repairs the gut lining.	Oats, artichokes, leeks, onions, garlic, bananas, barley, seed husks, psyllium, legumes, lentils, peas, soy (miso).
Insoluble	Keeps stool soft and bulky. Helps with diverticular disease, haemorrhoids, constipation and bowel cancer.	Wholegrain cereals, seeds, nuts, brown rice, quinoa, buckwheat, millet, corn, rye, wheat bran, rice bran, skin on fruits, skin on vegetables.
Resistant Starch	Feeds the good bacteria and helps to keep the bowel lining healthy.	Plantain, unripe banana, lentils and cooked and cooled potato and pasta.

According to the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating, adults need to consume 25-30g of fibre each day. It is best to get your intake of fibre from healthy food sources rather than a supplement. Reducing saturated fats, added sugars, processed foods and alcohol in your diet and increasing fruits and vegetables is recommended for good gut health.

Introducing probiotics and prebiotics to your diet can also be beneficial. Probiotics are found in fermented foods such as kimchi, yoghurt and kefir and in some fruits/vegetables such as banana, artichoke, onion and garlic. Prebiotics are the non-digestible parts of plants which travel through the small intestine undigested and are fermented in the colon. This fermentation process is what feeds the 'good bacteria' colonies and increases the amount of these bacteria (which is associated with better health and a reduced risk of disease).

Remember it is also important to drink plenty of water when consuming fibre as dietary fibre naturally absorbs water, and if you are not getting enough fluids you may experience some abdominal discomfort or constipation.