



# Healthy is a mind-gut connection.

This month we examine the mind-gut connection, and how the mood you are in when you eat can influence everything from how your body digests the food, to even the hormones you release.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Your gut is very complex. It has its own nervous system (the Enteric Nervous System, or ENS), and the lining of your gut is stacked with endocrine cells - specialized cells that produce hormones. In fact, if you could clump up all of the endocrine cells in the gut into a single mass, it would be larger than all other endocrine organs - your thyroid, pituitary, gonads, and adrenal glands - combined!

- This means that the way that hormones are released throughout the body is drastically influenced by the gut and ENS.
- In fact, over 90% of your serotonin and over 50% of your dopamine, the neurotransmitters that you know for making your brain feel good, are formed right there in the ENS.
- New research shows that eating while in a stressed out state can negatively change your microbiome, increase fat storage, damage the lining of the gut, increase inflammation, and even cause the stomach to reverse its process and empty its contents upward.





# Avoid eating while stressed.

- + **Practice gratitude right before you eat.** Pause before you eat, give thanks, smile, and then enjoy your meal.
- + **Take four deep breaths.** Taking just four deep breaths before you eat lowers your stress significantly.
- + **Sit down at a table and enjoy the process of eating.** Working, driving, or rushing from one spot to another while you eat increases your stress. Consider meal time a break, and sit down to enjoy this process.
- + **Listen to music that calms you and makes you happy while you eat.** Restaurants have long used music to set the mood for your eating experience. Turn on your own calming and enjoyable music to create this same effect.
- + **Prepare the food yourself.** The act of preparing a meal has been shown to be as soothing as meditation. The Italians are well known for this, and they are consistently ranked as being one of the healthiest countries in the world. If possible, make the preparation of food part of your family or social eating experience.

Take your time and enjoy eating again. As amazing as your gut is at turning food into energy for all cells in your body, it only does this efficiently if you eat in a calm, non-stressed state.