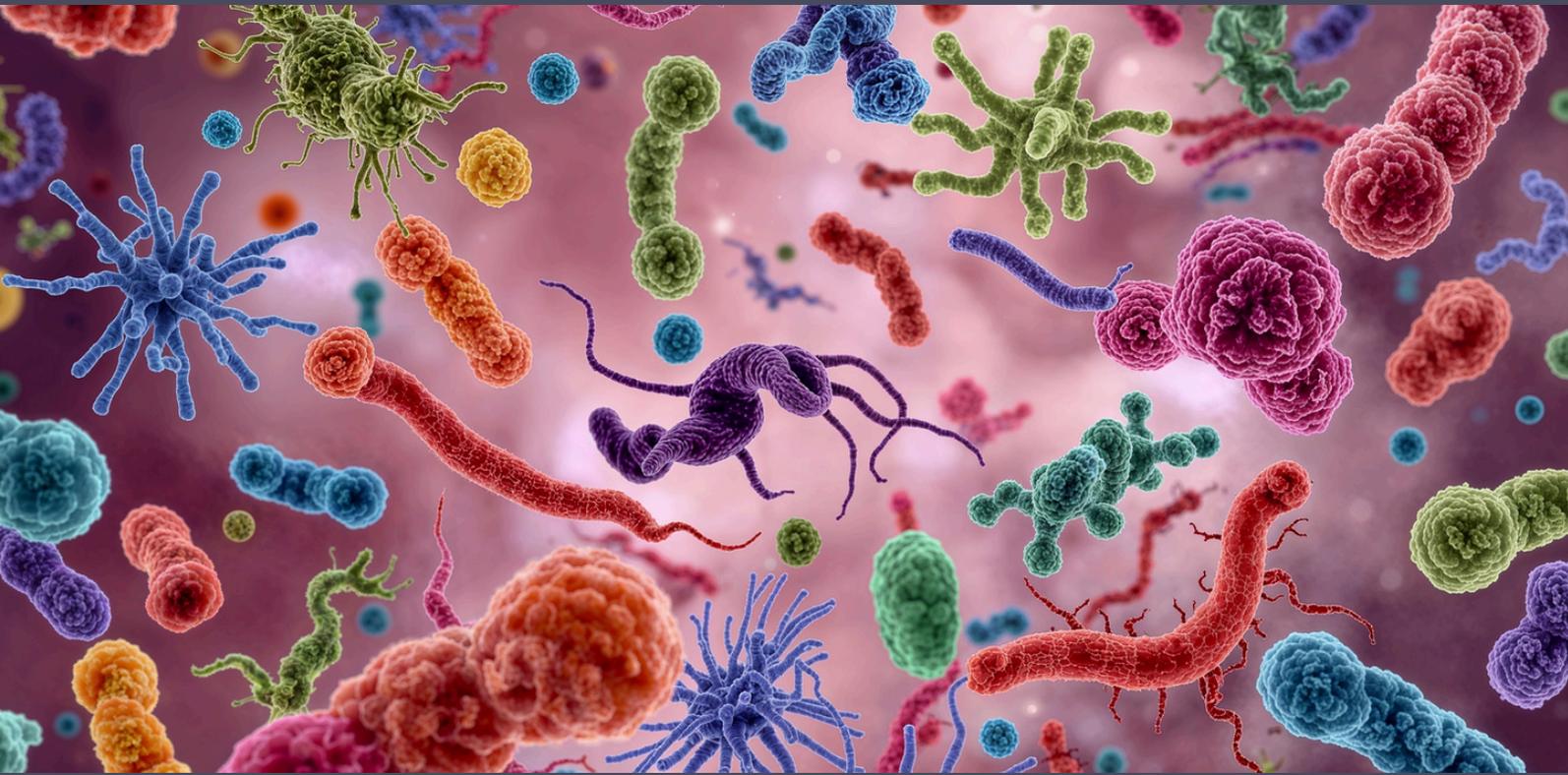


The gut-pain connection

YOUR MINI GUIDE



A gentle, psychology-informed resource for people living with chronic pain

HEALTHY MIND PSYCHOLOGY

Understanding the Gut-Pain Connection

The Gut-Pain Connection: Why Your Digestive System Influences Your Pain More Than You Think



Useful to know...

Did you know your gut and brain communicate through nerves, hormones, immune pathways, and microbes? An inflamed or imbalanced gut can heighten pain sensitivity, increase anxiety, disrupt sleep, and intensify stress. This guide explores the importance of gut health for pain and offers gentle, compassionate steps for improvement.

How Your Gut Influences Pain



1. Through inflammation
An inflamed gut sends “danger” signals to the brain, turning up the volume on pain pathways.
 2. Through your microbiome
Gut bacteria help regulate mood chemicals like serotonin, GABA, and dopamine. Imbalance = higher pain sensitivity, more anxiety, more fatigue.
 3. Through the vagus nerve
The vagus nerve connects the gut to the brain. When the gut is irritated, the brain receives this as stress or threat.
 4. Through stress hormones
Chronic stress weakens gut lining and increases inflammation, creating a feedback loop that amplifies pain.
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Exploring Your Gut-Pain Connection

Understanding your gut is important, but it can also feel overwhelming.

There are countless online claims, wellness trends, and “miracle fixes,” many of which aren’t grounded in real evidence.

As psychologists, we can’t advise on gut treatments or diets, but we can help you reflect on how you make sense of information and how your mind and body respond to it.



1. How do I usually seek out information about my health?

Do you rely on social media? Blogs? Trusted organisations?

How confident do you feel filtering what is evidence-based from what is opinion?

2. What helps me recognise “red flags” in health advice?

- Does the claim promise quick fixes?
- Does it rely on fear, urgency, or shame?
- Is it coming from a qualified, accredited professional?
- Are there reputable sources to back it up?

3. Who do I turn to when I need personalised guidance?

If you ever have concerns about gut symptoms or nutrition, would you know how to find:

- an accredited dietitian
- a registered nutrition professional
- a GP or medical specialist

What qualities would help you trust their guidance?

4. How does stress influence my gut habits or choices?

Do you notice emotional eating, skipping meals, craving certain foods, or avoiding them?

How might your nervous system be involved?

5. What old habits does my mind pull me back into, even when I want change?

- Are there comforts, routines, or coping strategies that feel soothing in the moment but unhelpful long-term?
- What thoughts come up when you try to shift these patterns

6. What small, compassionate steps feel realistic for me right now?

Not fixing or perfecting.

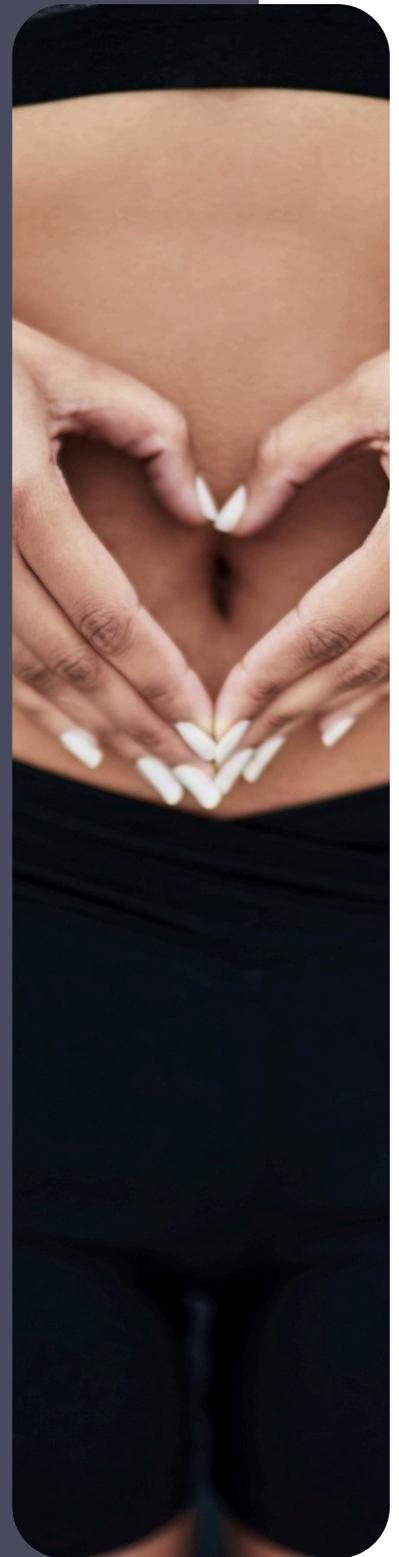
Just supporting your system in ways that feel safe, doable, and grounded in self-kindness.

A Reflective Journal Space

What Is My Gut Trying to Tell Me?

A gentle reflection to build awareness, not rules.

1. **How did my gut feel today?**
(Comfortable? Tight? Bloating? Neutral?)
2. **What emotions were present when I noticed discomfort?**
3. **What foods felt soothing or grounding for me?**
4. **What foods (or stressors) seemed to heighten tension or pain?**
5. **What helped calm my body today?**
(A walk, connection, slow breathing, warmth, rest?)



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This isn't about **perfection** or **restriction**. It's about ***understanding what your gut and your nervous system are quietly trying to communicate***, and responding with **compassion** rather than **fear**.

