

Diet and digestive health

Interactions between diets, nutrients, and the host in promoting health are almost entirely dependent on effective digestive function. Historically somewhat overlooked in nutrition research, recent years have seen the emergence of new research, new funding initiatives, and increased public interest in the role of gut health and its relationship to diet.

A growing area of interest and research

Despite the explosion of public interest in the topic, evidence-based communication around digestive health and the integration of evidence into practice by healthcare professionals is still nascent. A recent online survey of 1,000 Irish adults conducted on behalf of the healthcare company Scope in April 2019 (dubbed 'the Gut Education Index'), found that the internet is the second most used source of information on gut health after doctors, ahead of both nutritionists (41%) and pharmacists (63%).¹ Moreover, a large cross-sectional study found that while 64% of the UK public believed the effectiveness of probiotics had been proven in research studies, just 30% of doctors recommended them to patients.²

Diet can play a role in maintaining general gut health, with evidence also suggesting that diets and dietary components, such as pre and probiotics, may help with management of a number of digestive tract disorders. For example, probiotics taken in conjunction with antibiotics can speed up the rate of recovery in acute infectious diarrhoea.³ In fact, NICE recently issued support for the joint use of probiotics with antibiotics to reduce risk of antibiotics associated diarrhoea and primary *C.difficile* prevention, terming this a 'safe and effective' intervention for adults and children.⁴

The Winter Conference 2019 will focus on diet and digestive health

As a result, the Nutrition Society are looking forward to exploring the topic of diet and digestive health at this year's Winter Conference, 2-4 December, at the *Royal Society of Medicine* in London. This year the conference will be run in collaboration with the *British Society of Gastroenterology (BSG)* and the *British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (BAPEN)*.

This collaboration is intended to provide conference attendees with insight into the practical and clinical aspects of digestive health and disorders, as well as emerging research areas. The conference will therefore begin with a half-day BAPEN practitioner's session covering issues including oral nutrition support, percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) tube use, and anorexia nervosa treatment.

The conference will explore the relationships between diet, gut function, gut pathologies and systemic health, taking as its focus recent developments in the field and areas of continued debate. Keynote speakers include Professor Jonathan Rhodes, University of Liverpool, on '*Nutrition and gut health: the impact of specific dietary components – it's not just five-a-day*', and Professor Christine Edwards, University of Glasgow, with a plenary lecture titled '*Feeding the gut, nourishing the body*'.

To register and to view the full event agenda please visit:
www.nutrition society.org/events/winter-conference-2019-diet-and-digestive-disease

AfN CPD endorsement will be applied for.

References: **1.** Foodspark (2019). What do consumers understand about gut health? Accessed online: www.foodspark.com/Health-Lifestyle/What-do-consumers-understand-about-gut-health (July 2019).; **2.** Dimidi E, et al. (2019). Probiotic use is common in constipation, but only a minority of general and specialist doctors recommend them and consider there to be an evidence base. *Nutrition*; 61: 157-163.; **3.** Allen SJ, et al. (2010). Probiotics for treating acute infectious diarrhoea. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*; Issue 11. **4.** NICE. Accessed online: <https://cks.nice.org.uk/>

Events Calendar

September

- **18 September, NSTA webinar, 13:00-14:00 pm.**

'Environmentally sustainable diets – opportunities for nutrition professionals' with Dr Clare Pettinger and Dr Pamela Mason.

October

- **17 October, NSTA workshop at FENS 2019, 16:15-16:45 pm.**

'Ideas for careers' will be part of the Student Section session at the FENS conference, and a chance to network with a panel of career experts.

NJSJC - The Society's Journal Club is a one- hour monthly webinar discussion and free for all members.

Fit CPD in around busy schedules - Pre-recorded versions of recent NSTA webinars are available to listen to at a variety of different times on the website.