

6 red flags your gut is waving at you



All disease begins in the gut. This is what Hippocrates, the father of medicine said over 2000 years ago. Modern medicine has not only lost sight of this to an extent, but also the idea that our bodies give us signs when something is not quite right in the gut. These red flags that our bodies wave at us are often ignored or treated on the surface, when what our body is really saying is that you need to pay some attention and respect to your gut.

Digestive issues

This one may be obvious, but even when we're experiencing bloating, indigestion, diarrhoea and discomfort, we sometimes ignore it. Often it is put down to ageing or, once any inflammatory bowel disease (such as Crohn's, ulcerative colitis or coeliac disease) is ruled out, it is labelled as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and you are told to stop eating problematic foods. This is actually your body telling you it is in stress and that's it is time to give your gut a little attention.



Skin flare-ups

Inflammation and barrier integrity in the skin is a direct reflection of inflammation and barrier integrity in your gut. Poor gut health can initially show as dry, flaky skin, but can then trigger or worsens conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, rosacea and acne, so these are almost always a red flag from your gut that it isn't happy. No amount of topical steroid cream is going to fix the root cause. The focus needs to be on the state of your gut integrity.

Immunity

When we pick up colds and flus easily and have trouble shaking them off, this too is a sign that the gut is unhappy and our microbiome (the colony of bacteria which live in our colon) is out of balance. Roughly 80% of our immune system is located in the gut so when the gut isn't strong, neither is our immunity.

Sugar Cravings

Sugar cravings are not just because you like sweet food, they can actually be driven by your gut bacteria trying to manipulate you to consume more sugar. The more sugar you eat, the more it favours these sugar loving bacteria. These bacteria actually release chemicals that travel to your brain to make you want more sugar. This drives inflammation in the body eventually leading to numerous metabolic health conditions. Making changes to your diet will reasonably quickly turn this around and change the microbiome to be less sugar loving and less inflammatory.

Mood changes and brain fog

There is a very strong connection between the gut and the brain. Around 80% of our serotonin is actually produced in the gut. So when your gut is not functioning well, and our microbiome is not thriving, it impacts the production of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and can have a direct impact on our mood. Issues such as depression, anxiety and escalating PMS moods can be a red flag pointing to poor gut function.

Fatigue and insomnia

Gut production of serotonin also impacts sleep because serotonin is the building block of melatonin and melatonin production is important for regulating our sleep cycle. When we are not getting good, restful sleep and poor gut health is causing inflammation and not allowing us to digest, absorb and utilise all of the nutrients from our food, it can make us feel fatigued.

Conclusion

Naturopathy is all about reading the body's red flags and restoring function, balance and integrity before the red flag becomes a condition you can't ignore.