

INCLUDES 80 RECIPES

The  
28-Day  
GUT  
Health Plan

Lose Weight and Feel Better  
from the Inside

Jacqueline Whitehart

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**The 28-Day Gut Health Plan: Lose  
weight and feel better from the inside**

«HarperCollins»

## **Whitehart J.**

The 28-Day Gut Health Plan: Lose weight and feel better from the inside / J. Whitehart — «HarperCollins»,

Get Gut Healthy, Eat Well, Eat Different Many modern Brits are struggling not only with their weight but also with a sensitive gut. Food intolerances and digestive problems are on the rise. The 28 Day Gut Health Plan is an innovative book explaining how our modern diet and reliance on processed foods has decimated the good bacteria in our gut. This is not a book of science, rather a dedicated and simple 28 day plan that anyone can follow to improve their gut health and lose weight. • Easy to follow 28 Day Plan • Good vs Bad Bacteria • Gut Health and Weight-loss Tracker • Tailored Recipes for the Programme With a practical and light-hearted approach, the Plan will be full of helpful tips and advice and packed with Jacqueline's own fresh, healthy and delicious recipes.

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Jacqueline Whitehart is an expert health-food writer and best-selling cookery author.

With a practical and light-hearted approach, Jacqueline's books are full of helpful tips and advice, and are packed with her own fresh, healthy and delicious recipes.

Jacqueline is a busy working mum from Yorkshire who writes from the heart and from personal experience. She's not perfect, or a perfectionist; her down-to-earth approach to dieting and cooking speaks directly to her many readers, and she's always happy to answer any questions her readers may have.

Jacqueline's recipes are easy to follow with simple, readily available ingredients.

Jacqueline writes regularly on her blog, [www.52recipes.co.uk](http://www.52recipes.co.uk), and has a weekly free-recipe newsletter.

The  
**28-Day**  
**GUT**  
Health Plan

**Lose Weight and Feel Better  
from the Inside**

**Jacqueline Whitehart**



## Copyright

For Andy and the kids ... who are always putting up with my experiments.



Thorsons

An imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers*

1 London Bridge Street

London SE1 9GF

[www.harpercollins.co.uk](http://www.harpercollins.co.uk)

First published by Thorsons 2017

FIRST EDITION

© Jacqueline Whitehart 2017

Cover layout design © Holly Macdonald

A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library

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This book features weight-loss techniques which may not be suitable for everyone. You should always consult with a qualified medical practitioner before starting any weight-loss programme, or if you have any concerns about your health. This book is not tailored to individual requirements or needs and its contents are solely for general information purposes. It should not be taken as professional or medical advice or diagnosis. The activities detailed in this book should not be used as a substitute for any treatment or medication prescribed or recommended to you by a medical practitioner. The author and the publishers do not accept any responsibility for any adverse effects that may occur as a result of the use of the suggestions or information herein. If you feel that you are experiencing adverse effects after embarking on any weight-loss programme, including the type described in this book, it is imperative that you seek medical advice. Results may vary from individual to individual.

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Source ISBN: 9780008268916

Ebook Edition © August 2017 ISBN: 9780008268923

Version 2017-08-11

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## **Part 1**

### **FEEL BETTER FROM THE INSIDE**

## INTRODUCTION

Do you get that Christmas dinner feeling every day of the week? Does your weight seem unaffected by what you eat and how often you exercise? Do you sometimes feel drained and bloated after a meal? Do you get bouts of spotty skin even though you're way past being a teenager? Does your stomach sometimes keep you awake at night?

Talking about our gut-health problems is a taboo subject for many of us. If you'd been up most of the night with stomach pains, would you mention it to your friend over coffee the next day? Would you mention your loose bowels at the school gates? Of course not. We keep the pain and anxiety well hidden. And if the pain and symptoms just get worse year on year, do we complain? No, we just get on with it and learn to manage the symptoms.

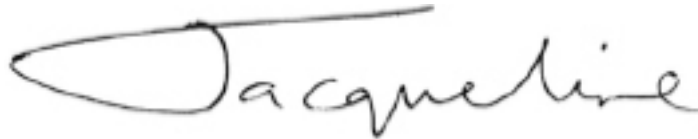
If you want weight loss, a flat stomach and a healthy digestion then let me steer you in the right direction. I challenge you to follow the 28-Day Gut-Health Plan. In four weeks, you'll lose weight – up to 3kg (7lb) – and it will all come off your tummy. You'll banish food cravings and restore the healthy bacteria in your gut. You'll take the first steps towards permanent weight loss, a healthier digestive system and a fitter old age.

What's more, with over 80 delicious recipes tailored to the programme, you'll find the plan to be both simple and tasty.

There are some really useful quizzes and trackers in the book and if you'd like them in a printable and reusable format, they are all available (at no cost) via [www.52recipes.co.uk/28G](http://www.52recipes.co.uk/28G)

Finally, I'd like to say that I'm always here to answer your gut-health questions and help you overcome your personal hurdles. You can contact me by email at [j@52recipes.co.uk](mailto:j@52recipes.co.uk) or get in touch via **52DietRecipes** on Facebook or Twitter.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqueline". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'J'.

Jacqueline Whitehart

## IS THE 28-DAY GUT-HEALTH PLAN FOR YOU?

Do you suffer occasional symptoms of gut sensitivity – bloating, gas, cramps or loose bowels? Do these symptoms appear quite randomly yet you can't tie them down to a particular foodstuff? Perhaps you suspect you might be intolerant to some foods but sometimes you can eat them without suffering any problems. The good news is that this plan can help you pinpoint the level of your food intolerances, reduce the symptoms and feel better and finally slowly reintroduce the food.

### Severe Food Allergies

If you have a severe food allergy, such as nut or egg allergy, or suffer from coeliac disease then you should be following expert treatment. **This book is absolutely no substitute for professional medical advice.** The book can still be used to find other intolerances as long as you first seek expert medical advice.

If your weight loss has stalled (or hasn't even got going), then your gut could be holding you back. Your digestive system is like your second brain, telling you what to eat and when. When those signals get confused because your gut is a bit toxic (sorry for the bad news), then it tells you to eat when you're not hungry and gives you irresistible cravings. We're going to give your gut a deep clean and find out the foods your gut likes and the ones it struggles with. As a result, your cravings will disappear and you will naturally lose weight. It's not uncommon for someone following the gut-health programme (but not thinking about weight loss) to easily lose half a stone.

Cutting out trigger foods also forces us to cook more real food. Do you believe your ready meal doesn't contain gas-inducing veg? Wrong. It's in the stock. Think your cereal bar is good for you? Wrong. It contains at least twenty ingredients including five kinds of sugar or sweetener.

But don't worry. I know you don't want to spend hours in the kitchen, which is why I've included a whole section of easy and delicious recipes for you to try. My recipes are always fresh and simple, use common ingredients and have been tried and tested by me. All those faffy bits that restaurant chefs like to add to make their food look beautiful (but take half a day to prepare) ... they're not in my kitchen.

Onions and garlic are two of the more common causes of a sensitive belly. They are potent, gassy vegetables and even the tiniest amount can set many people off. I'll introduce you to a new cheap and easy-to-get-hold-of spice that you've probably never even heard of. Add a pinch of this to a dish to add natural onion flavour, without the tummy consequences – and without the chopping! What is it? You'll have to keep reading to find out!

Gut sensitivity affects as many as 10 to 15 per cent of people in the UK and that figure is rising. And that doesn't even include the thousands – perhaps even millions – of people with mild or occasional issues who just battle on and never visit the doctor or discuss it with anyone.

What I'd like to show you in this book is a way to get to grips with the causes of your gut-health problems. For just one month, we'll cut out possible trigger foods and introduce them again in a controlled fashion. You'll get your own personalized guide to foods you can eat with no problems, foods you can eat in moderation and foods to avoid.

The trigger food groups that we'll be looking at are: milk, red meat, nightshade (such as tomatoes and chillies), gassy vegetables and wheat.

Please don't think, 'That's it. You're telling me not to drink milk or eat bread ever again.' First of all, it is rare to be intolerant to both wheat and milk. And even if you find foods that you are intolerant to, you'll hopefully still be able to eat them in small quantities. You'll know how to choose the right foods for you. I'll give you the tools to help you make your own choices. It's like drinking alcohol. We all know that it gives us a hangover the next morning, but sometimes we do it anyway. You might find that tomatoes give you a rotten tummy ache, but occasionally you'll think it's a price worth paying.

### **A LITTLE BIT ABOUT DIFFERENT GUT SENSITIVITIES**

One of the things that you quickly find when exploring gut sensitivities is that no two people are the same. How we react to certain foods and how our digestive systems behave is unique to us. Yet the mechanism is the same for everyone. And the root causes of all digestive issues are the same: inflammation of the gut lining, foods not being digested properly and the aptly titled 'leaky gut'.

In this book, I'll look at the root causes of digestive issues and explain how this can lead to IBS-like symptoms: stomach cramps and bloating and also to inflammation throughout our body. Frequent headaches, sinus pain and achy joints can all be linked back to our digestion.

## **HOW DOES THE 28-DAY GUT-HEALTH PLAN WORK?**

The 28-Day Gut-Health Plan is a unique and simple programme that anyone can follow. With a scientific basis, down-to-earth advice and delicious recipes, **The Gut-Health Plan** delivers wellness, weight loss and a healthier gut.

The plan acknowledges that there are five common food triggers, as I've already mentioned – wheat, milk, nightshade, red meat and gassy vegetables – the cause of over 95 per cent of digestive difficulties. We rest the gut for a week then introduce each trigger individually on a three-day cycle to come up with a detailed plan of your own personal sensitivities.

The plan starts with a simple gut assessment to help you work out 'what's up'. You then follow a cycle of rest and food trials for the twenty-eight-day period, while recording your progress in a **Gut-Health Diary**. Plus you'll get my own personal brand of enthusiasm, advice and dedication to help you every step of the way.

At the end of the plan, as well as feeling better, having a flatter stomach and losing weight, you'll complete a **28-Day Review**. The review is designed to be your 'take-away' from the programme, with a simple checklist of what to eat and what to avoid for your own personal gut health.

We can't fix decades of 'food on the run' and 'processed food mania' in just one month. But we can help you make significant and noticeable changes in just four weeks. And with the tools that this programme provides, you can make better choices and continue to improve your gut in the long term.

We start in the **Rest and Restore Phase**, also known as the R&R phase, by cutting out damaging trigger foods. It can be limited but not boring with all the delicious recipes I have created for you to try. The diet is also low in sugar and as you will be avoiding processed food and eating three balanced meals a day, you will naturally lose weight and feel better.

Don't worry if you feel more bloated or your symptoms get worse over the first week. You are asking your body to do an awful lot. In fact the first week is really about building up the good bacteria and strengthening the gut so you are ready to start afresh in week two. If at any stage you hit a blip and feel your gut health deteriorating, put yourself back on the R&R programme.

Then over the following three weeks, you test each problem food individually, recording any gut consequences as you go. In this way, you build up a detailed picture of your own personal sensitivities.

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY GUT?

An imbalanced digestive system is like a polluted river. It's grey and clogged with blockages. Years and years of pollution mean that the river is clogged up and the fish are few and far between.

Your gut lining is like a riverbank, muddy and bulging. The food you eat is like the water running through the river: it chugs along slowly, getting stuck and polluted. The fish are the good bacteria that have been killed off by years of 'food on the run'.

During the 28-Day Gut-Health Plan, we are going to cut out all the pollution – the junk foods and trigger foods – so that the river runs clear. We are going to reintroduce the 'fish' by adding probiotics to our diet. Then our gut will be strong again, and with a strong, healthy gut, the whole body is healthy and renewed.

### **COMMON GUT PROBLEMS**

The symptoms of an unhealthy gut include bloating, gas, cramps, food sensitivities and aches and pains.

If these symptoms affect your daily life severely, this is classed as a medical problem and people are often diagnosed by their doctors as suffering from IBS. But the majority of us haven't reached that level. We're struggling on, just managing, and yet slowly the symptoms become more frequent and gut health becomes more of a worry.

The plan aims to reduce your symptoms and helps you learn what foods you should avoid, what foods you can have in moderation and the foods of which you can eat as much as you like.

The symptoms we are hoping to address are:

1. Stomach cramps
2. Bloating and swelling of your stomach
3. Diarrhoea
4. Constipation
5. Excessive Wind

### **THE PATH TO IBS**

The five symptoms – stomach cramps, bloating, diarrhoea, constipation and excessive wind – that are classed as gut-health symptoms are also the symptoms of IBS. Whether you have IBS or not is simply a matter of severity. There is no test that you pass or fail for IBS; it is just a question of how your symptoms affect your daily life. If you get severe stomach cramps overnight then this means that you don't sleep well and your whole life is affected. This would be IBS. But occasional symptoms are annoying and we tend to just pick ourselves up and get on with it. The trouble is, year on year, your symptoms will slowly and almost imperceptibly get worse. You learn to manage them better, not complaining and just carrying on.

*'Whatever stage you are at, this programme aims to reduce your symptoms by a significant and measurable amount.'*

The easiest way to discover more about the health of your gut is to use the **Initial Gut Assessment Quiz** (see [here](#)). This gives you a gut-health score on a scale of 1 to 10 and helps you to answer the question: 'How bad is it?' If you want to see the progress in your gut health during the programme you can take the quiz again at the end of the plan and see by how much your score has reduced.

The aim of this plan is to reduce your symptoms and hopefully get rid of some of them entirely. You will gain a deeper understanding of your body and its sensitivities, so you are less likely to trigger them. If you find foods that you are sensitive to, don't worry too much as you will be able to eat them in moderation later on. Just in smaller quantities and less frequently.

### **DO YOU HAVE A 'LEAKY GUT'?**

What is a leaky gut?

A leaky gut affects the whole body. It's caused by sections of the gut, normally joints or bends, becoming more porous and developing holes. Food molecules can leach through these holes and enter the bloodstream. The food toxins in your bloodstream set off your natural alarm system. A few undigested food molecules don't cause a huge problem – your liver is called into action to deal with the toxins. But if the gut is very porous, the liver is quickly overrun and then these foreign bodies absorb into tissues throughout the body, causing them to inflame.

What causes a leaky gut?

Inflammation in the gut lining causes the microvilli filters that act as the barrier between our gut and our bloodstream to be swallowed up. The microvilli are like very fine hairs that protect the delicate gut wall from bigger undigested food molecules. If part of the microvilli are aggravated and inflamed, then those food molecules can get through the lining and become a toxin in the bloodstream.

This can be caused by:

**A. Diet:** refined sugars, processed foods, preservatives and refined flours. Too many toxins in the gut over many years means that the gut becomes inflamed as it just can't keep up.

**B. Stress:** stress almost always results in a suppressed immune system. A weakened immune system cannot handle doing its normal job and gets overrun more quickly, causing inflammation.

**C. Bad bacteria:** if the bacterial balance in your gut is wrong, the 'bad' bacteria can take over and lead to inflammation.

How do you know if you have a leaky gut?

Instead of or as well as gut-health problems (stomach cramps, bloating, diarrhoea) you may get:

Multiple food sensitivities

Frequent colds and illnesses

Skin complaints such as eczema and rashes

Headaches, brain fog and fatigue

### **THE BOTTOM LINE**

Your gut-health problems, aches and pains and food intolerances could all be intrinsically linked. Let's start at the root of the problem, your gut, and see if we can understand it better. If we understand it and acquire the tools to fix it, then we can control and reduce the other symptoms too.

This 28-day plan is just the start. If you've been eating processed foods, refined flours and excessive sugar for twenty, thirty or forty plus years, then we can't fix the gut in one go. But we can take some huge, positive steps in the right direction and get you feeling better right now.

## **HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR GUT HEALTH**

The 28-Day Gut-Health Plan is unique in its aim to dramatically improve the state of your gut in just 28 days. How does it do this? There are three practical and effective ways in which we tackle the health of your gut.

### **3 STEPS TO BETTER GUT HEALTH**

#### 1. Resting your gut

*'Like a detox but with food.'*

The Gut-Health Plan is not about starving yourself and eating less food. You will eat less, but this will be because of changes in your gut that will result in a reduction in cravings and choosing foods which will keep you fuller for longer. For the first week of the plan, called the Rest and Restore phase, you will remove the five most common trigger foods for a sensitive digestion. These foods are harder for your body to digest, so stay in your gut for longer, causing problems along the way.

The foods that you will eat in the Rest and Restore phase may seem quite restrictive, but you will notice an improvement relatively quickly. Essentially, by sticking to easily digested foods for at least a week, your digestive system doesn't need to work anywhere near as hard. It's a relaxing time for your digestion and it will reduce digestive stress. If the gut is not constantly working to digest food, it starts to recover and rebuild. This is a simple yet crucial part in the jigsaw of good gut health.

#### 2. Reducing inflammation

Certain foods can cause the gut wall to react in a negative way. It can make the gut lining swollen, inflamed and extra sensitive. Now, the food triggers that cause inflammation are different for each person. But if we cut out ALL the common triggers during the Rest and Restore phase, then your gut lining has the best chance of getting back to normal. The gut cannot heal when it is inflamed.

#### 3. Introducing good bacteria

The third crucial phase is to improve the balance of bacteria in our gut. We do this more quickly by adding probiotics to our diet for the duration of the programme. Of course, following the programme and reducing processed foods and wheat will slowly improve the bacterial balance anyway, but we are going to give it a helping hand. The best probiotics contain several different strains of bacteria as well as a high concentration of them. Improving bacterial balance means that the food you eat is better digested, which is important for gut health.

### **THE POWER OF GOOD BACTERIA**

Your gut is chock-full of bacteria, good and bad. We can supplement our diet with probiotics (good bacteria) to help reverse the damage caused by years of junk-food overload. Probiotics are found naturally in some foods, particularly yogurt. But to really have an impact on our digestive systems, a probiotic supplement is the best way to ensure we have enough good bacteria to balance the gut effectively.

The good bacteria in a probiotic supplement will:

Aid the digestion of complex foods and/or foods which you cannot currently digest

Compete for space and nutrition with harmful bacteria, reducing their numbers and reducing stomach complaints

Prevent toxins moving from the gut into the blood

Unfortunately, the popular probiotic drinks and enhanced foods don't really cut the mustard when it comes to supplementing. To get any real benefit, you need a probiotic tablet or powder. The number of different bacterial strains, together with the concentration of bacteria, is most important for success.

The most proven and the one now being prescribed by specialists for IBS and similar illnesses is a brand of probiotic called VSL3 ([www.vsl3.co.uk](http://www.vsl3.co.uk)). This brand contains the most strains of good bacteria and has 450 billion bacteria per sachet. But it is expensive and needs to be kept refrigerated.

### **THE BLOATING PROBLEM**

Probiotics plus more fibre can lead to extra bloating in the first week of the programme. When you start taking probiotics you could get more bloated not less. But if you care about improving your gut health, it's a really important step. And in a strange way, it shows that the probiotics have started to do their job. They've started the battle and are breaking down foods that your body normally doesn't digest, producing more gas. Give the probiotics a week during the Rest and Restore phase and you'll see the bloating reduce. At the end of the week, your waist size and bloating will have reduced and be back to normal. You might even have lost weight and an inch or two round your tummy.

The more traumatized your gut the worse this will be. Give it a week. It will get better. And it means that a change for the better has begun. Don't start the Introducing phases until it is resolved.

### **FIBRE VS INTOLERANCE**

One of the key tenets of improving your gut health and soothing your bowel symptoms is keeping levels of both soluble and insoluble fibre high. But look at this list of fibre-rich foods:

Vegetables: broccoli (raw), cabbage, carrots (raw), peas and spinach

Grains: whole grain-breads, whole-grain cereals, oatmeal and bran

Beans/pulses: kidney beans, lima beans, black beans and lentils

And if we compare it with our list of top five food intolerances (see [here](#)), there's a huge overlap! Broccoli and cabbage are gassy vegetables, bread and cereals all contain wheat, and don't even get me started on how gassy beans can make you!

On the one hand, we need to restrict these possibly gut-intolerant foods. On the other, fibrous foods are needed to ensure smooth running of your insides. It's a real conundrum and one that we can only fully address when we reach the end of the 28-day plan.

During the programme, you should up your consumption of safe fibre-rich foods. Most fruits, especially bananas and berries, are safe and rich in fibre. Oats are particularly good as they are very easy for the body to digest and are an excellent source of fibre.

If you look at the recipes, I use the odd-sounding psyllium husks in various recipes including my Seeded Gluten-free Bread (see [here](#)). Psyllium is a powder that forms a fibrous gel on contact with water. It should be used sparingly but is perhaps one of the purest sources of fibre. It can be sprinkled onto breakfast cereal and added to recipes to improve fibre content.

Finally, buckwheat, which contrary to its name contains no wheat or gluten at all, is a fabulous source of fibre. I particularly like using buckwheat pasta as that opens up the way to lots of delicious pasta sauces and bakes.

If you suffer from either constipation or diarrhoea, then increasing the fibre in your diet (from non-problematic sources) can make stools softer (good for constipation) or bulkier and more regular (good for diarrhoea).

Be aware, though, that just like the addition of probiotics to your diet, increasing your fibre intake can initially lead to bloating and constipation. So if you are adding all of these at once at the start of the 28-day programme, then you may find that some symptoms, particularly bloating, increase during this time. If it becomes too uncomfortable, cut out the additional fibre and concentrate on the probiotics in the first instance. Fibre can be added gradually later when you have a better understanding of your food intolerances.

### **UNDERSTANDING YOUR OWN SENSITIVITIES**

The 28-Day Gut-Health Plan is all about understanding your own sensitivities. We all react differently to different foods, and as so many factors influence our gut health it's often hard to pinpoint what's wrong and why.

Is it the slice of toast that gave you stomach cramps? Or nervousness about an exam? Perhaps it's your period? Or even the menopause? Did you sleep well last night?

By following this plan we are trying to cut out as many uncertainties as we can. We do this by eliminating the five most common food intolerances for a week. Then introduce the possible trigger foods one at a time. Key to success is accurate recording of symptoms using the **Gut-Health Diary** (see [here](#)).

### **HOW MUCH WEIGHT CAN I LOSE?**

The amazing bonus of the 28-Day Gut-Health Plan is the weight loss that goes hand in hand with improving your gut-health. This happens simply because you are cutting back on processed foods and sugars, eating foods that your body can digest and eating three filling and balanced meals a day.

When you first give up all trigger foods during the Rest and Restore week, the weight loss can be quite dramatic. As much as one pound a day in the first week. The rate of weight loss is obviously dependent on how much weight you have to lose, but you should expect upwards of three pounds in the first week. After this, the weight loss will settle down but you should continue to lose weight at a rate of one to three pounds a week, depending on your personal intolerances. This diet is not a 'fad' diet; it's a healthy way of eating and the weight loss is real and permanent.

### **TOP 5 WAYS TO MINIMIZE GUT STRESS**

#### **1. Don't eat big fatty meals**

Make your meals smaller by reducing your plate size. Realize that a 'blow-out' meal like a takeaway, fish and chips or lots of red meat will antagonize the strongest gut. This is made worse if the meal is eaten late in the evening, as you 'sleep on your food'. Steer clear if you can. But if you can't, take probiotics for at least a week afterwards and consider trigger food elimination to reset the gut.

#### **2. Keep alcohol and caffeine levels low**

Sadly for those of us that love both coffee and wine, alcohol and caffeine can have a negative effect on the gut. Caffeine is a stimulant and makes the gut overactive and increases bowel movements. Alcohol irritates the gastrointestinal tract, so can make your symptoms worse. Additionally, both alcohol and caffeine make you more dehydrated. The good news is that it is rare to be intolerant to alcohol or caffeine, so neither needs to be eliminated entirely. Just be aware of their effects and try and reduce consumption during the programme and when your gut health is poor.

#### **3. Drink more water**

Increasing the amount of water you drink is perhaps the easiest way to improve your overall gut health. It simply helps keep everything within the gut moving smoothly. Always keep a water bottle to hand and make sure you drink whenever you are thirsty. Additionally, drink a glass of water first thing in the morning (to wake up your digestion) and make sure you drink at least one glass of water before every meal and more during the summer months.

Remember, caffeinated drinks are diuretic (make you more dehydrated) and the bubbles in carbonated drinks can pass through the body undigested and cause uncomfortable wind.

*Short answer: Water is best!*

#### **4. Keep away from artificial sweeteners**

Artificial sweeteners such as sorbitol and sucralose can cause diarrhoea and flatulence even if you have a healthy gut. All sweeteners that end with an -ol should be avoided and watch out for the use of different names on packaging that are meant to confuse you into thinking these sweeteners are natural. All sweeteners are considered toxins by the body and your gut tries to expel them quickly.

#### **5. Avoid ready meals and shop-bought baked goods**

Ready meals and shop-bought baked goods can contain hidden triggers, and even a small amount of a trigger food could set you back. Use the tips and recipes in the book to make simple real food quickly. Low-fat or reduced-calorie foods are particularly bad as the good bits have been sucked out along with the calories and replaced with empty and unnatural fillers that can irritate the gut lining.

## INITIAL GUT ASSESSMENT QUIZ

This initial assessment is vital in getting a baseline reading of the state of your gut health. It will help you compare objectively to others. Importantly, it will help you to answer the question:

*'Is it really that bad?'*

### **YOUR OVERALL HEALTH**

1. Do you have low energy or feel overly fatigued?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 Never

10 Always

2. Do you consider yourself to be overweight?

0 1 2 3 4 5

0 Perfect Weight

2 A little bit overweight

4 Very overweight

5 Obese

3. Do you suspect you have food intolerances or allergies?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 No

10 Strongly Suspect

### **INFLAMMATION**

4. Do you have skin complaints? For example, itchy skin, rashes, eczema, rosacea, acne, hives, psoriasis.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 No

5 Occasional

10 Yes, moderate to severe and/or multiple

5. Do you have hay fever, dust or pet allergies?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

0 No

5 Some, unmedicated

10 Yes, medicated and severe

6. Do you experience joint pain or unexplained muscle pain?

0 1 2 3 4 5

0 Never

3 A little

5 Daily

7. Do you suffer from frequent sinus pain or other sinus-related issues?

0 1 2 3 4 5

0 No

2 Occasionally

5 Yes, often

8. Do you get problems such as brain fog, chronic headaches, anxiety?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0 Never			5 Occasionally					10 Yes, often		

**YOUR DIGESTION**

On average, and when eating without restrictions, how many **days a week** do you suffer from:

9. Stomach cramps:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

10. Diarrhoea:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

11. Constipation:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

12. Bloating:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

13. Acid reflux:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

14. Excessive wind:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

**WORKING OUT YOUR SCORE**

Add up the scores for every question (1–14) and use the chart below to check the current state of your gut health.

Gut-Health Total.....

My Gut-Health Score.....

Total Points	Gut-Health Score
9 or below	1
10–14	2
15–19	3
20–24	4
25–34	5
35–39	6
40–44	7
45–54	8
55–59	9
60 or above	10

### **WHAT DOES YOUR GUT-HEALTH SCORE MEAN?**

#### **9–10 Severe**

Disrupts your everyday life.

You may already be under the care of your doctor, and if not you should consider it.

The Gut-Health Plan may help you but you should also take medical advice. Be prepared for the programme to take longer than normal, and to find many food sensitivities.

#### **7–8 Moderate to Severe**

Although your gut health doesn't bother you every day, you suffer more often than not and are always thinking about it.

The Gut-Health Plan should help you to get to grips with your gut-health. You are likely to find one or more food sensitivity.

#### **3–6 Mild to Moderate**

Your gut health doesn't affect you every day. But it is slowly but surely getting worse. You might find that it gets worse during periods of stress and uncertainty and at inconvenient times, such as when you are on holiday.

The good news is that this programme can help reverse the flow and help you understand and improve your gut health.

#### **1–2 Mild**

You may suffer from occasional symptoms. You are unlikely to have any intolerances. If you feel that your gut health is getting worse, then this programme will get you back to optimum gut health.

## THE 5 BIG TRIGGERS

During the 28-Day Gut-Health Plan we are concentrating on the five most common food triggers for gut health:

- 1.Lactose (Milk)
- 2.Red Meat
- 3.Nightshade family (tomatoes, (bell) peppers, chilli peppers, aubergine)
- 4.Gas-producing (gassy) Vegetables (onions, garlic, broccoli, beans)
- 5.Wheat

We are concentrating here on **food intolerances** as opposed to **allergies**.

An intolerance:

Develops over time

Gets worse as you get older

Doesn't always affect you in the same way

Can allow you to still eat the food in smaller quantities

With food allergies, you are either born with them or develop them as a young child. The reaction to foods is intense with only a very small quantity. Your food allergy may have involved medical treatment of some kind, although there is no cure. If you have an allergy, it is very black and white. You know about it and are hopefully receiving medical support. For our purposes, being coeliac is definitely an allergy. If you have an allergy, you can still find support for other possible food intolerances in this book and hopefully find recipes that support your allergy and your lifestyle.

Remember that any food intolerances develop from an underlying gut-health problem. You can inherit gut-health problems or they can be caused by the foods you eat and the lifestyle you follow. This is why gut-health symptoms tend to worsen as you get older.

We start to mend the gut by first introducing probiotics. These will improve the bacterial balance. Foods will be digested better and are less likely to come into contact with the gut wall. Although probiotics will improve your entire gut, it is a slow process and doesn't deal directly with any food intolerances you might have developed.

For this reason, in addition to the probiotics, we start the 28-Day Plan with a 7-Day Rest and Restore phase that removes the five common food triggers from your diet. By removing the intolerance (the food that your body considers most toxic), we can reduce the inflammation in the lining of the gut. It is only then that the gut can start to heal.

When the gut has started to heal and symptoms have reduced, we can then reintroduce trigger foods gradually and see what effects they have on YOUR body. The aim of the programme is not only to improve the health of your gut, but also to understand your own specific food intolerances so that you can learn to balance the foods you eat with the effect they have on your body.

We introduce food groups in a particular order, with the trickiest and most difficult triggers to diagnose coming last – gassy vegetables and wheat.

### **LACTOSE (MILK)**

Lactose or milk sugar is a sugar found only in milk or milk products.

#### **Milk vs Dairy**

A common misconception, however, is that anything made from milk contains lactose. Which is why some people may be confused and eliminate all dairy from their diet.

Dairy does define all food made from milk. However, in 'hard' or solid dairy products such as butter or cheese all the lactose has been removed. If you think back to domestic science, or perhaps even the nursery rhyme, milk is split into curds and whey. Curds is the solid protein and fat and contains no lactose.

An even simpler definition is:

*'If you have to cut it with a knife, it's safe.'*

**Milk (lactose) foods to avoid**

Milk, all types including skimmed and semi-skimmed

Cream

Custard

Fromage frais

Ghee

Ice cream

Margarine

Sour cream

Yogurt

Milk or white chocolate

Soft cheese such as cottage cheese, cream cheese, halloumi

Additionally, check the ingredients list on: cereals, baked goods, crisps, cooked meats and soups. Look out for any of these in the nutritional information, as they all signify lactose: casein, caseinates, sodium caseinates, hydrolysed casein, milk powder, milk solids.

**Safe dairy foods**

Butter

Hard cheese such as Cheddar, feta and Parmesan

Note that eggs are not a dairy food, contain no lactose and can be eaten safely.

**Using lactose-free milk to simplify the removal of milk lactose from your diet**

Lactose-free milk is now commonly available in every supermarket and is a really simple way to cut out lactose from your diet and see if it makes a difference to your gut health. You can also buy lactose-free yogurts, soft cheese and cream.

**RED MEAT**

Red meat can be problematic for your gut health for two reasons:

1.Red meat is simply one of the hardest things for your gut to break down and digest. It is often the case that occasional small quantities of red meat are OK for all but the most sensitive digestions. But increase the quantities, eat it late at night or together with a large, fatty meal and the likelihood of a problem increases hugely.

2.The other problem with red meat can be bacterial. This could mean that you have a problem with one meat in particular, be that beef, pork or lamb. This sometimes happens if you've had a bad bout of meat-related food poisoning in the past. The gut becomes colonized by the bad bacteria and you stay sensitive for years afterwards. Probiotics really help here as they can reduce or eliminate the problematic bacteria.

On the plus side, it is unlikely that you will have to eliminate red meat entirely from your diet. Just remember moderation is always the key to avoiding problems with red meat. If you do have a problem, cut out all red meat for at least forty-eight hours until all symptoms have passed.

**Red meat to avoid**

All forms of beef, lamb, pork and game

Minced beef

Burgers

Sausages

Ham

Duck

Game

Bacon

Salami

Chorizo

**White meat (you can eat as much as you like)**

Chicken

Turkey

All parts of the bird can be eaten, including the dark meat, such as turkey thigh.

### **NIGHTSHADE**

Fruits from the nightshade family – tomatoes, bell peppers, chillies and aubergines (eggplants) – contain glycoalkaloids and/or capsaicin, which are surprisingly common triggers for a sensitive gut. It is estimated that as many as one in three of us could be sensitive to nightshades, although for many people it is a minor rather than major intolerance.

The highest concentration of glycoalkaloids is found in tomatoes. Tomatoes, either fresh, tinned or in pastes or passatas, are harder to avoid than you might imagine. Many dishes, from stews to curries, have tomatoes as their base. The problem with glycoalkaloids is that they can destroy cell membranes and can ‘burst open’ cells. This property is part of their natural defence against small mammals and birds that like to eat the sweet fruits of these plants. To the smaller stomachs of these animals, the glycoalkaloids have a toxic effect. As a much bigger animal, humans should be immune to their effects, but unfortunately, weakened gut linings have made people more susceptible to their effects. It has been suggested that by damaging the gut lining they may be one of the causes of leaky gut.

The other molecule in these red (and green) fruits is the tricky capsaicin. Capsaicin has a very different but equally nasty effect on the gut. Capsaicin is an irritant, and in the same way that you get pain and watery eyes if you just touch your eyes after chopping a chilli, capsaicin can irritate and inflame the gut lining, causing stomach cramps and pain. All chillies, fresh, dried or in powder form, contain the dreaded capsaicin. In fact, all red spices – e.g. paprika, chilli powder, cayenne pepper – contain concentrated capsaicin and should be avoided.

Fresh chilli peppers contain both glycoalkaloids and capsaicin, so are ‘the perfect storm’ when it comes to nightshade sensitivity.

#### **Foods to avoid**

Fresh tomatoes

Tinned tomatoes

Tomato purée

Tomato ketchup

Peppers (bell) – red, green, yellow and orange

Aubergine (eggplant)

Chilli peppers

Pimento peppers

Chilli paste

Chilli sauce

Jalapeños

Paprika

Mild or hot chilli powder

Curry powder

Madras powder

Cayenne pepper

Basically the food rule is:

*‘Steer clear of red foods.’*

### **GAS-PRODUCING (GASSY) VEGETABLES**

Most of the carbohydrate foods we eat release bubbles of gas as they are digested. In some people, it is not the gas in itself that causes the problem; it is how our bodies deal with the bubbles. If

you are sensitive to gas-producing foods then it is likely that you suffer from painful stomach cramps as the gas gets trapped and your body tries to push it through the digestive tract. Unfortunately this gets worse at night as we are lying down ‘at rest’ and the natural movement of the body and gravity are not there to help push the gas away.

Gas-producing vegetables are perhaps the most common problem for people with a sensitive gut. Some troublesome veggies such as beans and cauliflower are relatively easy to avoid. But perhaps the most difficult foods are onions and garlic. They are incredibly tricky to steer clear of because they make their way into all sorts of unexpected foodstuffs, being a key flavouring for many meals. And secondly, they are the absolute worst at causing the production of gas. Even a tiny amount can trigger a reaction and cause a sleepless night.

Total abstinence from these foods is advised. I know this is difficult, but it might just be the root of so many gut issues that it is absolutely worth the effort. Use the recipes in this book to help. There is a huge variety of meals and flavours to stop your food being bland. Then learn the few key food swaps – lactose-free milk, celery, asafoetida and garlic oil (see [here](#)) – that can really make things easier. And think positive ... You may never have to chop an onion again!

#### **Foods to avoid**

##### *Onions and garlic*

- Red onion
- White onion
- Spring (green) onion (white part)
- Onion powder
- Onion flavouring
- Garlic
- Garlic paste
- Garlic flavouring
- Garlic salt
- Leeks

Note that the green part of a spring onion is allowed, as are chives and celery. Garlic oil is also allowed (and makes a fantastic substitute). The damaging part of the garlic is not soluble in oil, so a garlic-infused oil contains lots of garlic flavour without any of the risks.

##### *Other vegetables*

- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Kale
- Cabbage

##### *Beans and lentils*

All kinds of beans including:

- Kidney beans
- Baked beans
- Haricot (navy) beans
- Butter beans (lima beans)
- Borlotti beans
- Black-eyed beans
- Soy beans

All kinds of lentils including:

- Red lentils
- Brown lentils
- Puy lentils

Chickpeas should also be avoided.

## **WHEAT**

If you have a fat tummy, love handles or ‘man boobs’, you are not alone. Look around you. The characteristic paunch is extremely common. It gets worse as you get older, and is virtually impossible to shift through diet and exercise. What if this unshiftable belly is caused by twenty years of wheat overload? There’s new thinking that suggests that wheat could be the primary cause of your inflated belly and bloating.

### **Why avoid wheat?**

Not all carbs are the same. Starchy or complex carbs such as rice, oats and potatoes release their energy more slowly than sugar, which is a simple carbohydrate. But isn’t wheat a complex carbohydrate? Yes. But it has unique properties that actually make it release its energy at the same rate as sugar.

Think about how much wheat you eat daily. It’s probably part of every meal. And if you have a snack it’s likely to be present there too. Could the problem be wheat overload? We know that wheat cannot be fully digested and may cause small tears to appear in the intestines.

### **Cut out wheat entirely**

As wheat is in so much of the food you eat you’ll need to start looking at the packaging of every food you buy. Even better, stick to whole, natural foods which don’t come in a packet, and get back to basics with your cooking.

### **Foods to avoid**

- Bread
- Cake
- Biscuits
- Pastries
- Pies
- Crackers
- Pitta or wraps
- Beer
- Malt or malt extract
- Pasta
- Noodles
- Pancakes
- Breakfast cereals
- Barley
- Rye
- Bulgur wheat

### **Gluten-free products – good or bad?**

You need to approach gluten-free food products with caution. These processed foods are often full of very quick-release carbohydrates such as rice flour and sugar. Your best bet is to prepare your own food, which you can guarantee as gluten-free naturally.

However, I have found that it helps to feel less restricted if you can have access to a gluten-free bread now and again. We are lucky that there are now hundreds of gluten-free products available. If you find a gluten-free bread that you like, then you should treat yourself occasionally. Even better, buy a gluten-free bread flour and make your own gluten-free bread. I have perfected my own recipe for this and you’ll find it in the **Step Up Recipes** section.

## **EVERYBODY IS DIFFERENT**

### **MY OWN JOURNEY**

▶ Jacqueline, in her forties

▶ Symptoms – bloating

I used to feel bloated even after eating a small meal. Bloating is so subjective, it's hard to know the exact cause and solution. I didn't tend to feel poorly, so it was hard to pin it down to any one cause. I also got eczema on my face and had a tendency to migraines.

After much experimentation last year (this programme is intended to cut out the grey areas allowing you to reach your own conclusions much quicker), I discovered that wheat was the problem. The difficulty is that with bloating caused by wheat intolerance (which is so common), it doesn't come straight after eating wheat; it comes maybe a day later and lasts about forty-eight hours. So if I eat wheat on the Monday, I might not get symptoms until Tuesday and they won't completely disappear until Thursday. It's so easy to eat a little bit of wheat every day and then the bloating never really goes away.

I cut out wheat completely for a few months and felt a lot better for it. My eczema cleared up nicely and the frequency of my migraines decreased. All due to cutting out wheat.

That's not quite the end of the story. And this may be familiar to some of you. I was feeling better and I knew this was due to cutting out wheat. I wanted to try and reintroduce it slowly. I missed bread. And the first few times I experimented with bread it seemed fine. A bit of bloating the day after eating wheat is easy to overlook. Unfortunately, this led to me, almost imperceptibly, going back to eating wheat every day. And slowly but surely my symptoms returned. It took seeing my stomach in the mirror to acknowledge it. My tummy was not fatty or flabby ... just bloated.

My new plan, which I have been following successfully for the past few months, is to cut out wheat entirely once again. But I make a wheat-free loaf of bread and eat gluten-free bread most days (see [here](#)). I have to use a rice flour to make the bread, which isn't ideal. But I have realized that total wheat restriction is no fun in the long run. So my long-term rules for me are: no wheat and no processed foods. But if I want to eat chocolate, gluten-free bread or make some cookies containing real sugar, I do.

Let's hear from some other people I have helped find their own trigger foods, and who enjoy their life more due to a greater understanding of their gut health.

### **ANGELA**

▶ Angela, in her fifties

▶ Symptoms – stomach cramps at night

Angela has been getting stomach cramps at night for thirty years. Not every night, but sometimes they are so bad that she barely sleeps at all. She noticed a correlation with nightshade, so for a long time she has avoided tomatoes in all their forms. Her symptoms became progressively worse over the years. She then tried removing wheat and dairy from her diet with little success.

It was only on total removal of all gas-producing foods that her symptoms improved.

Angela's triggers are nightshade and gas-producing vegetables. In particular, she knows that even a tiny bit of onion or garlic will trigger her symptoms. Tomatoes in small doses and cooked tinned tomatoes are less of a problem.

Her solution is to avoid onions, garlic, leeks, beans and lentils totally. She also takes probiotics when her stomach is weak or when she needs antibiotics. She takes a fibre supplement (a teaspoon of ground psyllium) daily.

Angela allows herself to consume tomatoes and peppers in small amounts up to three times a week. She also eats wheat and dairy freely.

### **STEPHEN**

▶ Stephen, in his forties

▶ Symptoms – loose bowels

Stephen is a busy executive who has a stressful job. In a particularly difficult period at work, his symptoms became unbearable and made it difficult for him to do his job properly.

On the advice of the doctor, he cut out all five triggers until his symptoms abated. Then, after a long period of trial and error, it became clear that it was the milk in his many cups of tea that was the problem. Stress also exacerbated the symptoms. His treatment involved probiotics for three weeks to rebuild the gut.

He now does not have milk or yogurt, although cheese is fine. He also is careful about how much red meat he eats. Meat in moderation is fine, but overindulgence can cause his symptoms to reappear.

### **ANTONIA**

▶ Antonia, in her thirties

▶ Symptoms – severe stomach cramps, bloating

Antonia found her symptoms were making her miserable and interfering with her life. She chose to take a food-intolerance test, which highlighted red meat, milk and wheat.

Antonia avoids these three triggers entirely and she is now symptom-free.

### **JOHN**

▶ John, in his seventies

▶ Symptoms – bloating

John didn't feel he had any intolerances or symptoms. However, he did notice that he was bloated after meals and struggled to lose weight despite eating more healthily. John consumed a lot of wheat (as many of us do), so he decided to cut it out for one month to see if he noticed the difference. After a month wheat-free he felt so much better – more energy, no bloating and yes ... he'd lost half a stone.

John now eats wheat only on special occasions – a rustic roll in a restaurant or a piece of homemade birthday cake – with no symptoms, but he knows that if he eats wheat more regularly his symptoms will return.

## FOOD AND DRINK

You may be wondering what on earth you can safely eat on the programme. There's plenty of truly nutritious and safe food that's available and not too complicated to make. I'll also introduce you to some great **Healing Foods** (that can help your gut recover faster) and some **Hero Foods** that add lots of flavour without risking your gut.

### SAFE FOODS

These are the foods that you know are 100 per cent safe to eat at any stage of the plan.

Meat, fish and eggs

Chicken

Turkey

Eggs

Fish

Prawns

Salmon

Tuna

Tofu

Dairy and alternatives

Lactose-free milk

Almond milk

Soya milk

Coconut milk

Butter

Cheddar

Feta

Brie

Goat's cheese

Mozzarella

Swiss cheese

Parmesan

Vegetables

Carrot

Bean sprouts

Green beans

Beetroot

Pak choi

Celery

Celeriac

Chives

Spring onion (green part only)

Sweetcorn

Courgette

Cucumber

Fennel

Ginger

Lettuce

Rocket (arugula)

Peas

Potatoes (without skin)  
Spinach  
Sweet potato  
Butternut squash  
Swiss chard  
Water chestnuts  
Fruit  
Avocado  
Banana  
Blueberries  
Orange  
Satsuma/clementine  
Lemon  
Lime  
Grapes  
Kiwi  
Melon  
Pineapple  
Pomegranate seeds  
Raspberries  
Strawberries  
Rhubarb  
**Nuts and seeds**  
Almonds (ground almonds)  
Walnuts  
Hazelnuts  
Macadamia nuts  
Peanuts  
Pecans  
Pine nuts  
Chia seeds  
Pumpkin seeds  
Sesame seeds  
Sunflower seeds  
Grains and cereals  
Oats  
Rice  
Buckwheat  
Cornflour (cornstarch)  
Oatbran  
Polenta  
Quinoa  
Fats and Oils  
Mild olive oil  
Olive oil  
Extra-virgin olive oil  
Confectionery and sugar  
Dark chocolate  
Honey

White sugar

Brown sugar

Maple syrup

### **Herbs and spices**

Basil

Chives

Coriander (cilantro)

Ginger

Parsley

Rosemary

Tarragon

Thyme

Cinnamon

Cumin

Five spice

Star anise

Turmeric

Asafoetida

Sauces

Mustard

Tamari (wheat-free) soy sauce

Maple syrup

Balsamic vinegar

Apple cider vinegar

Peanut butter

Mirin

Worcestershire sauce

Fish sauce

### **HEALING FOODS**

If you want foods that not only are ‘safe’ but also help heal the gut from the inside then these are my absolute top foods. Some, like kombucha, help reduce inflammation of the gut, some improve the bacterial balance and others help the digestive tract run more smoothly.

Apple cider vinegar and balsamic vinegar

Both these vinegars taste amazing and are so versatile. I make a simple salad dressing with both and it is absolutely delicious. Apple cider vinegar and authentic balsamic are fermented foods. Fermented foods are natural sources of really good gut bacteria. These bacteria complement those found in probiotics and help you gain the best balance. Both vinegars also contain acetic acid (it’s what makes them sharp) which helps lower the sugar that we absorb from our food. Here is my perfect go-to salad dressing ...

*Everyday Healing Vinaigrette*

Simply mix together 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, 2 tsp apple cider vinegar, ½ tsp balsamic vinegar, ½ tsp English mustard and a generous seasoning of salt and black pepper.

Kombucha

Kombucha is a fermented tea drink. It naturally inhibits the growth of harmful bacteria and has a soothing and anti-inflammatory effect on the gut lining. If you think you have a leaky gut and it is making inflammatory conditions such as arthritis and acne worse, then kombucha may be beneficial for you. There are some amazing online shops selling kombucha drinks that are worth hunting down. And if you find the drink helpful, you can then go on to make your own easily and relatively inexpensively.

#### Tamari wheat-free soy sauce

Instead of standard soy sauce, you can now buy tamari soy sauce from most supermarkets. It's a fraction more expensive but not disastrously so. Naturally fermented and wheat-free, it adds different bacterial strains to the probiotic mix.

#### Psyllium husks

Psyllium is a prebiotic powder that you can buy from health-food shops. I recommend it as it's the purest and simplest way of adding prebiotics to your diet. Prebiotics are a special type of fibre that complement probiotics as they encourage the growth of good bacteria in your gut. Think of prebiotics as food for the good bacteria. Once you have 'sown the seed' of probiotics, prebiotics will encourage the good bacteria to grow and flourish. Additionally, the fibre element helps keep your digestive system running smoothly and relieves both diarrhoea and constipation symptoms.

I use psyllium in gluten-free bread recipes, but you can also dissolve a teaspoon in water or juice. It is a very concentrated fibre source, so it is important to drink at least two glasses of water or juice with every teaspoon.

#### Olive oil

The more natural the oil or fat the better. For this reason the ONLY fats I use in cooking are olive oil and butter. Olive oil is by far the least processed of the oils we use and has a very high percentage of heart-healthy monounsaturated fat. You can get olive oil in three varieties (and I use them all): 'normal' olive oil is my go-to oil for frying and general cooking, extra-virgin olive oil is fabulous in salad dressings and mild (or light) olive oil is great for baking or anywhere you just need an oil without the olive oil flavour.

#### HERO FOODS

When you're avoiding whole food groups, it's easy to feel that you're cutting out all the flavour and excitement from your food. After all, if you cut out meat, tomatoes, onion and wheat, what is left?

Actually, there is plenty, but to avoid bland food you have to be a little bit clever with your food swaps. You'll find that I use all of the swaps listed here in the Gut-Health Plan Recipes and they are key to moving forward and living with food intolerances, whether just for the short term or if you find you need to avoid these foods for the foreseeable future.

#### Lactose-free milk

Lactose-free milk can now be found in any supermarket; it's only a little bit more expensive than your standard semi-skimmed. What's more, you can't taste the difference, so it's one of the easiest swaps ever. There are also lactose-free yogurts and ice cream but they are a little bit harder to find.

#### Onions and garlic

Onions and garlic are perhaps the hardest foods to avoid. If you think about it, the vast majority of our meals contain them in some form or another. If you're buying pre-prepared food, it's practically guaranteed. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that only a small quantity can set off an intolerance, so we need to be very careful indeed.

#### Garlic oil

Garlic oil is extra-virgin olive oil infused with garlic. Unlike garlic powder or pastes, the oil picks up the flavour of the garlic but without the troublesome 'gassy' molecules. This is because the garlic is not soluble in the oil, but it is in water. Garlic oil is brilliant because it can be used in practically any dish that requires garlic. Simply substitute 1 teaspoon of garlic oil for 1 clove of crushed garlic. Garlic oil is completely safe for sensitive tummies. You could also try chilli oil as a great way to add heat to a dish without the chilli.

#### Celery

Celery should be your go-to onion substitute in many dishes. It has a slightly milder flavour than onion. But if you add one or two chopped celery sticks in the place of an onion in a dish, particularly a traditional British dish like Cottage Pie (see [here](#)), then you won't notice the difference.

#### Asafoetida

If you've not heard of asafoetida before, you are not alone. It's not a commonly used spice outside of the Indian sub-continent. A yellow spice, also called 'hing', it can be purchased cheaply and easily from the supermarket. In cooking it adds a mild onion or leek flavour to any dish. You need about a teaspoon as a substitute for an onion and it does add a yellow colour. It really is fantastic for adding warmth and depth of flavour to a dish. I'm a total convert and use it in many dishes.

#### THE PROBLEM WITH PROCESSED FOODS

Here's the thing: processed foods are bad for you. We all know it. But they are immensely hard to avoid. They are the primary cause of the modern obesity epidemic and the root cause of so many food allergies and intolerances. Honestly, I would prefer it if you ate a huge slice of homemade chocolate cake, rather than one 'healthy' shop-bought granola bar.

Processing brings preservatives, colourants and flavourings. But it also has no regard for the delicate balance of our gut. The refining and sanitizing of the product, together with hidden sugars and unnatural chemicals, means that any processed or pre-prepared meal is an alien invader on the sensitive gut.

How do we define a processed food?

As a simple rule of thumb:

*'If it has an ingredients list and that list contains more than three ingredients, then that is a processed food.'*

This isn't as bad as it sounds! Obviously meat, cheese, milk and vegetables are all fine as they don't have an ingredients list at all. And we are not ruling out food that has been tinned or processed for longer life, either. Tinned tomatoes, for example, are fine. As is smoked salmon. You've also got all those blessed timesavers like pre-cooked rice, ready-to-eat lentils or beans, or pasta. You can even have bread – as long as you make it yourself ...

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. A lot of these foods need to be banished temporarily while we get on top of the current condition.

#### TIME FOR A REBOOT?

Think of the 28-Day Gut-Health Plan as a month of bed rest and recuperation for your gut. At the end of the programme, not only will your gut health have improved and your weight reduced, but other seemingly unrelated conditions such as migraines and eczema might also have cleared up.

*'The 28-Day Programme cuts out some real food ... but only temporarily as a way of short-circuiting and rebooting the system.'*

The ultimate goal of the plan is for you to be able to eat all the trigger foods in moderation, and the key to that is a life-long avoidance of processing. Yes, that means more cooking. And it means if you want a cake or a cookie, you'll have to make it yourself. But there are plenty of ways to prepare healthy food quickly. And through the recipes and guidance here you'll find speedy and simple ways to make real food from scratch in minutes.

#### DENIAL VS BALANCE

Some digestive issues come from an overindulgence in foods like wheat and dairy over time. You may need to deny yourself these foods during the plan because of many years of overindulgence. But when the plan has finished you should know much more about your trigger foods and how to avoid them. Foods that you thought were a problem might not be a trigger at all. And the majority of people find that their trigger foods can be incorporated on occasion with no ill effects.

Moderation is the key. A really big meal containing lots of your trigger foods or one which is exceptionally fatty or calorific might well trigger a problem.

*'Your gut is a sensitive soul who can easily take offence. Treat it nicely and it will reward you by behaving sensibly for many years to come'*

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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