Your gut is amazingly responsive to both good and bad influences. Fortunately, many good influences can help you strengthen your gut. For example:

 **Exercise.**

Scientists are now studying the link between exercise and a healthy gut. One of the early studies compared the gut health of the national rugby team of Ireland with the gut health of a group of sedentary men. Researchers found that the athletes had a far more diverse microbiome than the sedentary men did (microbial diversity is highly desirable in gut health).[[1]](#endnote-1)

 **Sleep.**

The gut microbiome is a crucial player in how often and how seriously we’re affected by a range of both acute and chronic conditions. Sleep is one of many behaviours that build and helps support a balanced and diverse gut microbiome. Getting adequate sleep not only assists with diversifying our gut health, it also helps reduce stress, which may help prevent many gastrointestinal disorders.[[2]](#endnote-2)

 **Choose foods that your gut loves.**

A high-fat diet can prevent good gut bacteria from flourishing. Saturated fats may increase the number of inflammatory gut microbes. Research suggests that there is a correlation between a high fat, low-fibre diet and colorectal cancer, the third most common cancer in the world.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Incorporate some or all of the eight “super foods” that scientists believe actually super-charge the gut microbiome. These are:[[4]](#endnote-4)

1. Asparagus, Jerusalem artichokes, leeks, and onions
2. Bananas
3. Beans
4. Blueberries
5. Broccoli and other cruciferous vegetables
6. Fermented plant foods
7. Polenta
8. Probiotics[[5]](#endnote-5)

Be sure to participate in *The Gutsy Challenge* and get started today <for your chance to win>! <Visit XX to pick up your copy of the challenge materials.>

1. Gut microbiota, “Exercise and associated dietary extremes impact on gut microbial diversity,” June 2014 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. European Journal of Neuroscience, “Novel biochemical manipulation of brain serotonin reveals a role of serotonin in the circadian rhythm of sleep–wake cycles,” May 2012 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Imperial College London, ‘Diet swap has dramatic effects on colon cancer risk for Americans and Africans’, April 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. The Physicians Committee, “Seven Foods to Supercharge Your Gut Bacteria,” September 2014 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Therapeutic Advances in Gastroenterology, “Effects of probiotics on gut microbiota: mechanisms of intestinal immunomodulation and neuromodulation,” January 2013 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)