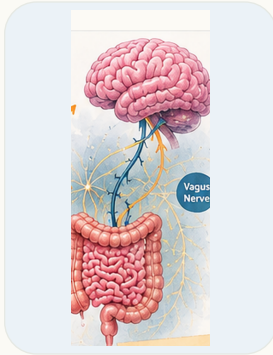


Why Does This Happen?

5 key mechanisms

Stress can change digestion through several connected nervous-system pathways.



1

BLOOD FLOW REDISTRIBUTION

During stress, more blood is directed toward muscles and the brain, and less toward digestive organs, so digestion can slow.

2

GUT-BRAIN AXIS SIGNALING

The gut and brain constantly exchange messages through nerves, hormones and immune signals.

3

VAGUS NERVE CONNECTION

A major communication pathway between gut and brain that helps regulate mood, calm and digestion.

4

CHANGES IN INTESTINAL MOTILITY

Anxiety can speed up or slow intestinal contractions, leading to diarrhea, constipation or both.

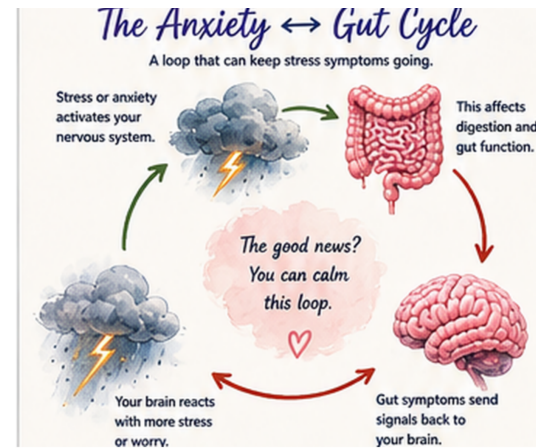
5

INCREASED GUT SENSITIVITY

Stress can heighten how the brain interprets normal gut sensations, so discomfort can feel bigger.

The Anxiety-Gut Cycle

Notice the loop. Support the system. Make more room for safety.



WAYS TO SUPPORT

- Slow, deep breathing
- Gentle movement
- Regular, balanced meals
- Hydration
- Time in nature
- Adequate sleep
- Self-compassion



Remember

- Your body is doing its best to protect you.
- Understanding this connection can bring relief and hope.
- Small steps can create meaningful change.

Your body and mind are on the same team.

Anxiety & Your Gut

It's All Connected

Your brain and digestive system are in constant conversation. When anxiety shows up, your whole body can feel it - especially your gut.

WHY IT MATTERS

Signals move back and forth through nerves, hormones and immune messengers, so emotional stress can directly affect digestion.



KEY SYSTEMS INVOLVED

ANS
Autonomic

ENS
Enteric

Vagus
Nerve

HPA
Stress axis

Brain-Gut
Axis

How Anxiety Shows Up in Your Digestive System

Your digestive tract is especially sensitive to stress - and your whole body can join the response.

UPPER GI (STOMACH)



- Nausea
- "Butterflies" in stomach
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling full quickly
- Acid reflux / heartburn
- Indigestion
- Discomfort or burning
- Stomach pain

INTESTINES (LOWER GI)



- Abdominal cramping
- Bloating
- Gas
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Back and forth (both)
- Urgency to go
- IBS flare-ups

And Across Your Whole Body

Anxiety activates a fight-or-flight response.

HEART & CIRCULATION

- Rapid heart rate
- Palpitations
- Chest tightness
- High blood pressure
- Dizziness

BREATHING

- Shortness of breath
- Rapid breathing
- Hard to take a full breath
- Sighing / air hunger

MUSCLES

- Muscle tension
- Jaw clenching
- Headaches
- Neck / shoulder pain
- Tremors / shaking

NEURO / SENSORY

- Dizziness
- Tingling / numbness
- Brain fog
- Trouble concentrating
- Heightened startle

APPETITE & EATING



- Loss of appetite
- Stress eating
- Nausea when eating
- Stomach tightness while eating
- Discomfort after meals

Eating can feel different when your system is on alert.

STRESS CAN AFFECT

- Intestinal motility (speed of movement)
- Secretion (fluids & enzymes)
- Gut barrier / permeability
- Sensitivity to sensations
- Immune responses in the gut

MICROBIOME MATTERS



Chronic stress can change the balance of good and not-so-good bacteria in your gut. This can affect mood, inflammation and how your body reacts to stress.

ENDOCRINE / HORMONAL

Stress hormones released:

- Cortisol
- Adrenaline
- Norepinephrine

These influence metabolism, immune function and digestion.

These sensations are real.

They may be part of your body's stress response.