



## Gut Health by Dr Talia Steed

There is so much information out there these days on this topic, that it can be an overwhelming minefield to sift through it all.

People are suffering with chronic symptoms of reflux, irregular bowels, bloating, distension, gas... Not the most comfortable of topics to talk about, never mind experience!

I have found through my professional experience of working with patients in GP practice, as well as my own personal health journey to wellness, that the major contributing factor to poor gut health is chronic stress and anxiety.

The gut is innervated by a complex web of nerve fibres from the parasympathetic (rest and digest) and sympathetic (flight or fight) branches of our autonomic nervous system. On a basic level it makes sense that when the body is exposed to chronic fight or flight activation mode, the gut can't relax and function as it normally would. We tend as human beings to seek out a cause when faced with problematic symptoms. Was it this food? Was it that?

We can drive ourselves into a spin of even greater stress and anxiety trying to identify the food that made us feel unwell. In reality a lot of the time though, especially when many foods seem to trigger off symptoms, it is not the specific foods that are aggravating our condition, but our guts inability to function mechanically as it normally would under calm conditions.

That being said of course some people have conditions such as Coeliac's disease, where gluten is triggering off an immune response in their body, but for the majority of people we need to look at things more broadly.

When we can learn to see that our fast paced society and busy way of living can be a contributing factor to our gut symptoms, we can choose a new focus in seeking optimal health and wellbeing. Tools such as mindfulness, especially mindful eating, yoga and pilates can help us learn to reduce the over-arousal in our over sensitised nervous systems. Also talking through the issues at play causing us this stress can be helpful to gain insights into how we could be making different choices in our thinking, emotional reactions and behaviours.

Please feel free to get in touch with the centre to schedule a session if gut health and stress is something affecting you.

