

Gut Health Is Not a Trend: Busting Common Detox and Digestive Myths

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Most of us have heard some version of the same advice: if your stomach feels uncomfortable, avoid “heaty” foods. If you feel bloated, reach for something “cooling”. If digestion feels sluggish, try herbal tea, a detox drink, or a little more fruit after dinner. But when digestive symptoms are persistent, recurring, or disruptive, they deserve more than guesswork.

[World Digestive Health Day](#) offers an important moment to pause. In 2026, the World Gastroenterology Organisation is focusing on chronic diarrhoea under the theme “Don’t Flush the Signs Away”, reminding people that persistent digestive symptoms should not be ignored or normalised. Chronic diarrhoea is often underreported because people feel embarrassed, yet it can signal underlying conditions that require timely medical attention.

This matters even more in our part of the world, where diets are diverse, flavourful, and often rich in ingredients that families have eaten for generations. At the same time, lifestyles are changing quickly. Urban consumers are eating more on the go, relying more heavily on convenience foods, and becoming more aware of how digestion affects daily comfort, energy, immunity, and long-term wellbeing. The result is a region that is interested in gut health, but still needs a more practical and evidence-based conversation about it.

Myth 1: Digestive discomfort is just part of everyday life

One of the most common misconceptions is that digestive symptoms are normal. Bloating after meals, irregular bowel movements, frequent discomfort, or changes in stool patterns are often brushed aside as the effects of stress, ageing, travel, or eating too much at a festive meal.

While not every mild rumble is a cause for alarm, the gut is one of the body’s most communicative systems. Persistent changes in digestion are often early signals that the internal ecosystem is out of balance. A practical approach to gut health

means refusing to normalise chronic discomfort; it involves recognising when symptoms are frequent enough to impact your quality of life and understanding that these signs warrant professional medical advice rather than just a lifestyle tweak.

Myth 2: Gut health is only about probiotics

In recent years, probiotics have become one of the most recognisable words in wellness. Many consumers now associate gut health with yoghurt drinks, fermented foods, or supplements containing live bacteria. These can certainly play an important role, depending on the strain and the evidence behind it. But gut health is not only about adding bacteria to the digestive system; it is also about nourishing the beneficial bacteria that are already there.

This is where prebiotics come in. The International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics defines prebiotics as a substrate selectively used by host microorganisms that confers a health benefit^[1]. In simpler terms, prebiotics act as food for beneficial gut bacteria, helping them grow and function in ways that support health.

This distinction matters because the gut microbiota is not a static system. It responds to what we eat every day, which is why a practical approach to gut health should also ask: “What am I feeding the bacteria I already have?”

Myth 3: All fibre is equal

Fibre is often discussed as one broad category, but not all fibres have the same effect. Some fibres help add bulk. Some support stool consistency. Some are fermented by gut bacteria. Some have a prebiotic effect, meaning they are selectively used by beneficial microorganisms and linked to specific health benefits.

Chicory root fibres, including inulin and oligofructose, are among the most extensively researched prebiotic fibres. More than 20 human studies across different age groups have shown that prebiotic chicory root fibres support digestive health by improving bowel regularity and softening stools, while being well-tolerated^[2].

This is where evidence becomes especially important. As gut health grows as a consumer priority, more products are using digestive wellness language. But “gut-friendly” should mean more than a marketing claim. For manufacturers, the opportunity is not simply to add fibre, but to use ingredients with clear scientific substantiation and practical benefits that consumers can actually trust and feel.

Myth 4: More is always better

Another misconception is that if fibre is good, more fibre must always be better. In reality, digestive health is often about gradual, consistent support rather than extremes.

For people who are not used to consuming enough fibre, suddenly increasing intake too quickly can lead to temporary bloating or discomfort. This does not mean fibre is bad. It means the gut may need time to adjust. A more realistic approach is to build fibre intake gradually, drink enough water, and choose fibre-rich foods that fit naturally into daily meals.

This is also why product formulation matters. Food manufacturers can make digestive health more accessible by delivering meaningful amounts of fibre in formats people already enjoy, making digestive support part of normal eating rather than another restrictive rule.

From awareness to action

PwC’s 2025 Voice of the Consumer survey found that health is becoming increasingly non-negotiable, with consumers scrutinising what they eat and looking for food that supports their health and wellbeing^[3].

For the food industry, this creates a clear opportunity: Digestive health is no longer confined to supplements or specialist health products. It is moving into everyday categories: beverages, snacks, cereals, bakery, dairy alternatives, and even indulgent products that consumers still want to enjoy more mindfully. Gut health will only become truly mainstream if it is easy to adopt, not if it feels like another complicated diet rule.

But this opportunity also comes with responsibility. As gut health becomes more popular, the industry must avoid oversimplifying it. Not every digestive issue can be solved by one ingredient. Not every fibre is prebiotic. Not every symptom should be ignored. And not every wellness trend is backed by robust science.

A better gut health conversation should be practical, not fear-based. It should help consumers understand when to seek medical advice, how everyday diet influences the gut microbiota, and why small, consistent choices often matter more than dramatic resets. For some, this may mean paying closer attention to persistent symptoms. For others, it may mean gradually

increasing fibre intake, choosing foods with scientifically proven prebiotics, or understanding the difference between general wellness language and evidence-backed digestive support.

This World Digestive Health Day, the message should be more balanced. Listen to the signs. Don't normalise persistent discomfort. Be cautious of quick fixes. And when it comes to supporting gut health through food, look for solutions grounded in science, not slogans.

[1] Gibson, G. R., Hutkins, R., Sanders, M. E., Prescott, S. L., Reimer, R. A., Salminen, S. J., Scott, K., Stanton, C., Swanson, K. S., Cani, P. D., Verbeke, K., & Reid, G. (2017). Expert consensus document: The International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP) consensus statement on the definition and scope of prebiotics. *Nature reviews. Gastroenterology & hepatology*, 14(8), 491–502. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrgastro.2017.75>

[2] Reimer, R. A., Theis, S., & Zanger, Y. C. (2024). The effects of chicory inulin-type fructans supplementation on weight management outcomes: systematic review, meta-analysis, and meta-regression of randomized controlled trials. *The American journal of clinical nutrition*, 120(5), 1245–1258. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajcnut.2024.09.019>

[3] <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/industries/consumer-markets/publications/voice-of-the-consumer-survey-2025-asia-pacific.html>