

Stroke Recovery Starts with Your Gut

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Stroke recovery requires time, care, and *knowledge*. Now that you've stumbled upon our blog (either through intention or fate), you will soon be equipped with all the knowledge you need to recover from stroke – starting with your gut!

Why Your Gut Matters in Stroke Recovery

Proper nutrition – particularly one that fosters a healthy gut – is an essential part of any good rehabilitation process. Along with aiding digestion, a gut-friendly diet can help reestablish healthy communication between your gut and your brain.

Wait, what did you just say?

Indeed, proper nutrition that fosters a healthy gut (i.e. getting lots of pre- and probiotics, which we'll discuss in our next article) can actually help your gut communicate with your brain. This communication occurs along the gut-brain axis, which is one of the most important (and extremely underlooked) aspects of rehabilitation after stroke.

We'll get to the gut-brain axis in a second. First let's start with an introduction to your microbiome.

'Til Death Do Us Part: Meet Your Microbiome

The microbiome has been gaining momentous attention lately, and some scientists even consider it a *paradigm shift* in neuroscience. But as researchers dig deeper, the discoveries get more and more complex. Here's what we know so far:

Your microbiome consists of the 100 trillion microbes (most of which are bacteria) living inside your body.

It might sound gross, but we honestly couldn't live without them. These helpful little bugs protect our health by enhancing immunity (with more than 60% of our immune cells originating in the microbiome) and aiding digestion.

We are especially interested in a healthy microbiome during stroke recovery as [studies](#) have revealed that a healthy microbiome can help protect against brain damage during stroke.

For this reason, nurturing a healthy microbiome is crucial during stroke recovery, and the rest of your life, because it can help **prevent a second stroke** and cure post stroke depression (which we'll cover in the next article 12/4/15).

Now it's time to meet your gut-brain axis.

Understanding How Epic the Gut-Brain Axis Is

Earlier you learned that your gut actually communicates with your brain, which is pretty epic. And it turns out that the gut actually has a nervous system of its own.

Did you know that you've had a second nervous system within your body this whole time? Can you imagine how important this discovery is for stroke recovery? It's called the **enteric nervous system** (ENS) and it controls your digestive system, pancreas, and gallbladder. The ENS also [communicates](#) with your central nervous system, sending information to the spinal cord about the gut's environment along with many other pieces of information.

With the brain making up the largest portion of the central nervous system, we bet you can understand the significance here.

So if you can nurture your gut, you can nurture your brain. And with our gut having such a strong tie to our brain, it's no surprise that it has a powerful influence over our mood too.

Part 2 of this series: Treat Post Stroke Depression with Probiotics