

[IMAGE]

Bad for the Gut

By Editorial Staff

In this issue, we've already talked about GI health and the side effects of medication. Now we'll combine both by discussing how antibiotic use – standard treatment for urinary tract infections, among other bacterial conditions – is bad news for the gut. Why? Primarily because antibiotics, as the name suggests, destroys bacteria.

What antibiotics *don't* do is discriminate: they destroy all bacteria, good and bad. Destroying the "bad" bacteria that caused the UTI or other bacterial infection is beneficial; destroying the "good" bacteria necessary for a healthy-functioning gut microbiome – now that's bad news. Recent research makes this unfortunate reality clear.

Urinary tract infections are particularly problematic because they so often recur; that means repeated cycles of antibiotics that wreak havoc on the healthy bacteria in the GI tract. In a year-long study, women with a history of urinary tract infections had "significantly depleted" gut microbiomes compared to women without a history of UTI. Recurrent UTIs depleted the "microbial richness" of the gut microbiome, according to researchers, whose findings appear in *Nature Microbiology*.

The moral to this story is twofold: 1) Ask your doctor if antibiotics are the only answer for urinary tract infections, particularly if they recur and you find yourself taking multiple courses of antibiotics. 2) Ask about restoring your GI's "healthy bacteria" (e.g., by taking probiotics). Take care of your gut and it will take care of you.

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