



# BENEFITS OF FERMENTED FOODS

Fermented foods are **rich in probiotic bacteria** so by consuming fermented foods you are **adding beneficial bacteria and enzymes** to your overall intestinal flora, **increasing the health of your gut microbiome and digestive system and enhancing the immune system.**

## **Digestion and absorption**

As some of the sugars and starches in food have been broken down through the process, fermented foods are easier to digest. For example, fermentation breaks down the lactose in milk to simpler sugars – glucose and galactose – which, if you are lactose intolerant, can make products such as yogurt and cheese potentially easier to digest.

## **Synthesis and availability of nutrients**

Fermentation can also increase the availability of vitamins and minerals for our bodies to absorb. Additionally, by boosting the beneficial bacteria in your gut, you are promoting their ability to manufacture B vitamins and synthesise vitamin K.

## **Immune functions**

A large proportion of the immune system is housed in the gut. By consuming probiotic-rich foods, you are supporting the mucosa (gut lining) as a natural barrier, making the immune system more robust. A lack of beneficial bacteria allows disease causing microbes to grow causing inflammation in the gut wall. If you have recently taken a course of antibiotics, probiotic foods are particularly helpful.

## **Phytic Acid**

Some natural compounds that interfere with the absorption of nutrients can be removed by fermentation. Phytic acid, for example, which is found in legumes and seeds, binds minerals such as iron and zinc, reducing their absorption when eaten. However, phytic acid can be broken down during fermentation so the minerals become available.

## **Mood and behaviour**

The gut and brain are linked, through the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis. Technically called the enteric nervous system, the gut is lined with neurons that can influence our emotions and feelings. Serotonin – a neurotransmitter involved in mood – is made in the gut and research further suggests that as probiotic bacteria contribute to a healthy gut, they are also linked to a healthy mind.