

HAVE YOUR SAY - RINGMEAD MEDICAL PRACTICE PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP NEWSLETTER



Happy New Year to our patients and Practice staff and a very warm welcome to the first 2023 edition of the Ringmead Medical Practice Group (PPG) Newsletter.

How does your gut affect your mental health?

In this issue we are covering the link between good mental health and the gut!

In recent years scientists have become increasingly interested in the function of our gut microbiome, that is the trillions of bacteria, viruses and fungi that live in our gut, mostly the colon or large bowel. The medical profession used to believe digestion was all about food being broken down by enzymes or the proteins made by our bodies. Recently however, it has become clear that much of the work of digesting food is actually done by our microbiome. In the past few years research has found that the gut biome impact extends far beyond the walls of the digestive system and could even be a fundamental contributor to emotional well-being.

Earlier studies focused on bad bacteria that could multiply in the gut leading to food poisoning or dysentery. Big discoveries have now been made about the gut biome and its role in helping to fight disease, for instance, some probiotics supplements which contain high levels of good bacteria have been found to reduce the duration of viral gastroenteritis or even help protect against nasty infections such as *C. difficile*!

Bacteria comes in many forms; some cause life threatening illnesses but other bacteria play a crucial role in health. Gut bacteria for instance helps digest food and extract energy and essential nutrients. However an imbalance of the microbiome, tipping in favour of unhealthy bacteria is called dysbiosis. This has been strongly linked to common gut conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome and possibly inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn's disease, diverticulitis and ulcerative colitis. Our gut contains about 70% of our immune cells. The immune system is key to fighting infection and the food we eat often contains potentially harmful germs. Called pathogens, likely to cause serious illness if they get into our bloodstream. So, the gut microbiome teaches the cells in our immune system to recognise and attack these pathogens making them a key factor in immunity.

The gut is also packed with nerve cells which control the release of blood to the gut when food needs to be absorbed into the bloodstream. A nervous system has the same type of nerve cells or neurons and the neurotransmitters found in our central nervous system. The correlation of both the immune system and the nervous system works with both our gut microbiomes and our brains.

It has been recognised that people with gut disorders such as IBS and diverticulitis can have high levels of depression and anxiety. Previously, it was assumed these mental health issues triggered or worsened IBS.

Now, many scientists believe dysbiosis may be the common link causing both conditions. The wider the range of microbiome means there is another type to step in. So, to keep ourselves healthy and free from illness it is recommended that we eat a wide range of foods

Try eating a wide variety of fruit and vegetables because they contain different chemicals, nutrients and types of fibre. Each of these supports and encourages different microbes. It is recommended that you aim for 30 different fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds in a week. Legumes and pulses can be easily added to existing recipes or substituted for meat. Most of us eat only 18g of fibre a day, 30 g is the recommended intake, this improves gut diversity and is linked to lower levels of heart and some cancers.

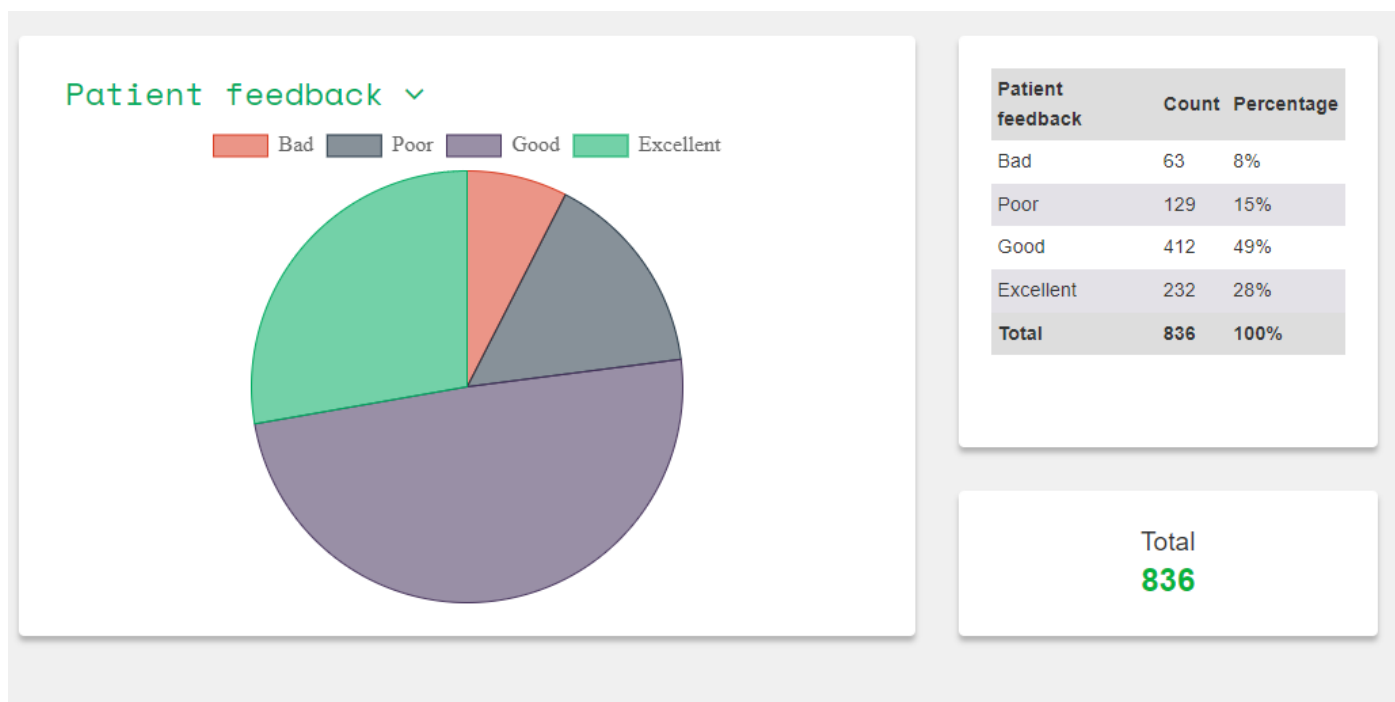
Antioxidants found in berries, nuts, seeds, olives, coffee, green tea and some vegetables can improve the quality of the gut microbiome. Prebiotic foods have fibres such as inulin, which promote the growth of healthy rather than unhelpful bacteria. Try garlic, onions, leeks, beans and peas. It is appreciated that some people cannot tolerate garlic and onions and some of the foods listed so it is better to use a trial and error approach if you are unsure. Fermented foods such as sauerkraut, live yoghurt, kefir, miso, tempeh, kimchi and sourdough bread are all good sources of probiotics.

However, as with any foods, it may be necessary to seek further advice if you are gluten, dairy or caffeine intolerant. Often appropriate food supplements can help, especially if you know you have low stomach acid.

There is now convincing new research that suggests there is a link between the gut microbiome and a mental health. This is termed "the gut brain axis"

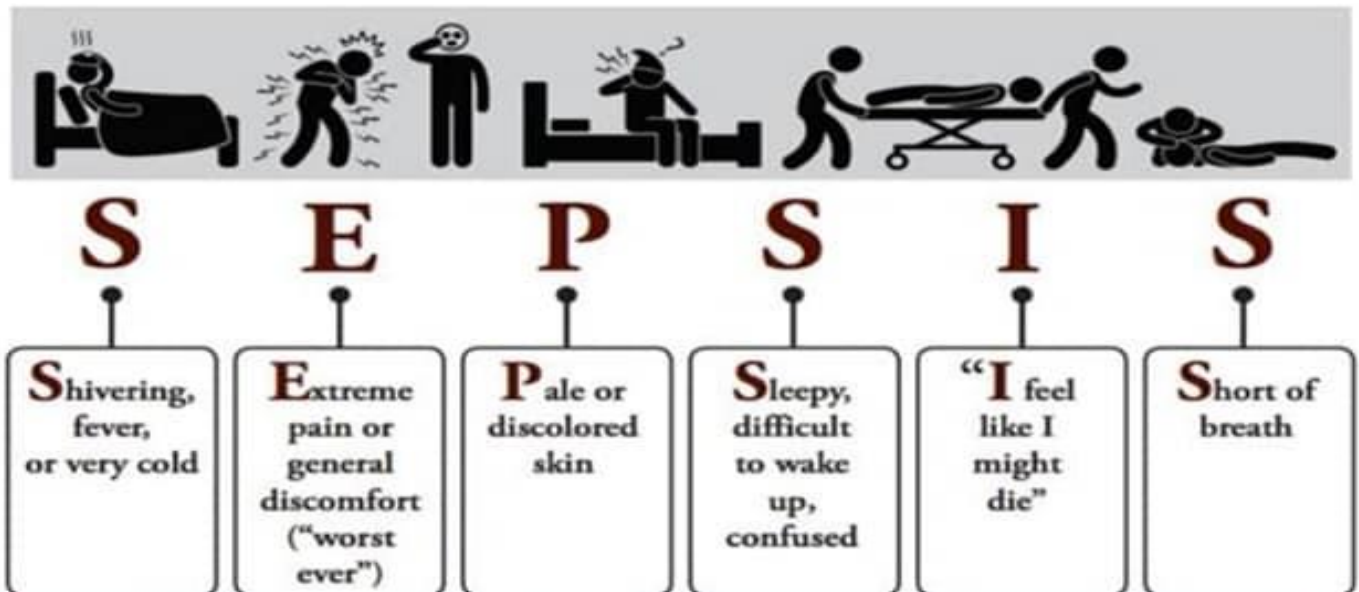
KLINIK

The graph below is feedback from patients on the new online system called KLINIK which can be found on the Ringmead Medical Practice website.



SEPSIS

Below is a chart which shows symptoms which must never be ignored



Symptoms of Sepsis

Common infections can lead to sepsis.

