

# byron healing

Vol. 6 2023-2024

Your guide to maintaining health and wellbeing  
in Byron and the Northern Rivers

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# byron healing

## From the past, new things grow

We are seeing a radical shift in the areas of health and healing as traditional and previously rejected practices are being looked at again with new eyes and practised in new ways.

Since the War on Drugs began the work and studies done with drugs such as LSD, psilocybin (aka magic mushrooms) and MDMA were suppressed and ignored. However, as they say with fashion, it always comes around again and it appears that the time has come to recognise the potential benefits of cannabis and other drugs and the positive impacts they can have on people's long-term health and mental health.

'Curative, restorative, repairing in a return to wholeness,' is how Belle Budden talks through traditional and emerging health practices of First Nations healing. It is about taking a holistic approach and not only considering the individual but their environment and community and how together they create positive healthy outcomes.

It is through the broader understanding of the intricate relationships between our bodies, our environments and our life practices that we are able to create change. While yoga, as many people on the Northern Rivers will know, is an ancient practice from India, there are new and innovative ways that it is being used to help people access new opportunities and ways of living as described by Adel Pheloung on page 14.

Adel explores some of the ways yoga is being used, from Indigenous yoga to taking yoga into prisons. There are a myriad of creative ways practices like yoga, acupuncture and other healing modalities can help people move forward in a positive way in their lives.

The relationships between ourselves and our environments, as well as between different parts of our bodies, all have an impact on our health and wellbeing. Recognising this, nutritionist Rachel Jeffery takes the time to talk about the relationships between food, our gut and the developing understanding we have of how they interrelate and impact on one another. The idea that 'what you are is what you eat' takes on a whole new perspective when seen through the eyes of your gut-brain connection.

Ultimately, caring for self, caring for Country and caring for how we interact with the world gives us very real opportunities to explore how to best live – here, today. It takes thought, it takes imagination, and it takes courage to understand the past practices, develop new ways of being, and to bring together all the best learning we have to take on the challenges each day with a little optimism, a little cynicism and a definite bent of pragmatism. If we can manage that then we are well on our way to a creative adventure and approach to positive health and healing.

– Aslan Shand, editor



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[www.byronbaydetoxgreens.com.au](http://www.byronbaydetoxgreens.com.au)

# byron healing

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Healing is an art.  
It takes time.  
It takes practice.  
It takes love.

~ Maza Dohta



## Retreats, Spas & Venues



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### Quartz Crystal Gallery & Cocktail Lounge

In the heart of Byron Bay, this crystal gallery and cocktail lounge is a stunning visual experience and a taste sensation not to be missed. Sit amongst magnificent crystals from all over the world while sipping on crystal-infused cocktails. Enjoy delicious vegan tapas by No Bones, an eclectic wine list, and a view of the Byron Bay lighthouse.

Quartz is also a unique events venue for hire. The space can literally transform before your very eyes to suit any function from hen's parties, to sound healings to creative exhibitions, product launches, and more.

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## Retreats, Spas & Venues



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Your mind will answer most  
questions, if you learn  
to relax and wait  
for the answer

~ William S. Burroughs

# Healing self, community and Country key

## Belle Budden

'Healing' from a First Nations perspective refers to the communities' holistic social, economic, political, emotional and physical health and wellbeing. Within a First Nations framework we understand that everything is connected and our healing mythologies reflect a holistic approach.

First Nations people live with complex intergenerational trauma, which the mainstream health system and associated industries are failing to address. The ongoing 'Close The Gap' reports demonstrate how the mainstream health system is failing First Nations people.

Here in the Northern Rivers we have some inspirational cultural approaches to healing.

Carlie (Caroline) Atkinson is a Jiman/Bundjalung woman living on Widjabul Wiabul lands. Carlie is the mum of beautiful twins, the CEO of We Al-li, founder of the Northern Rivers Community Healing Hub (an Indigenous approach to the healing needs of our community following the catastrophic floods) and an associate professor at Melbourne University.

'Our culturally-Informed trauma-integrated healing approaches start from an understanding that Aboriginal-specific, vital cultural processes that enabled healthy social systems to function for overall wellbeing, must inform our response to the generational trauma continuing from first invasion. 'Culturally informed' means our healing must be communal and refers to the deep culture of conflict management and group healing in critical ceremonies on a regular basis to sort our conflict and restore lawful relationships, on our land and with each other. Such ceremonies were normal essential communal activities,' explains Carlie.

Carlie shares that in We Al Li's work they often deal with two critical emotions, anger and grief. Anger is often compounded by self or medication with alcohol and other drugs, that comes from the generational layers of colonial dispossession and violence. Grief

*First Nations people live with complex intergenerational trauma, which the mainstream health system is failing to address...*

from the losses to land, deep culture, fractured kin relationships, rites of passage embodied in codes of ethical conduct, the essential ceremonies that defined law-lore with inner connectedness across these lands now called Australia.

'A trauma-integrated approach refers to our understanding that trauma is multi-layered, communal, passed down across generations, experienced and expressed in the distress, pain and suffering that defines our incarceration on our own Country. Trauma is compounded and complex across generations. 'Trauma integrated' means we understand the experiences and symptoms of trauma experienced by our people are generational, compounded and complex in the seventh to eighth generations of colonial intrusion. Trauma-integrated services use the knowledge base about trauma and fuse these principles within our own purpose and vision of healing ourselves, our families, our communities, organisations, and contributing to the healing of a nation,' outlines Carlie.

'Healing approaches draw on the meaning of the word healing – curative, restorative, repairing in a return to wholeness, while we share our cultures of holding healing ceremonies, together. The main difference between this approach and mainstream approaches is that it treats the human as a whole including an understanding that we are part of the living environment, Country and understands that cultural ways have provided activities that actually work with and prevent trauma,' Carlie continued.

Lara Lei is Indigenous programs coordinator at the Murwillumbah Community Centre, offering a holistic approach to service delivery including an Aboriginal family support worker, Kids Caring for Country After School Program (KCFC), Guyahyn early childhood playgroup and the Kinship Festival. These programs are free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and operate within strengths-based, person-centred and trauma-informed framework and offer advocacy, advice, case management, information and referral to Indigenous families in a culturally safe and supportive setting. These programs are part of a cultural framework which supports the return-to-wholeness approach and acknowledges the need for connection to Country, community, and cultural practice.

The Kinship Festival is an annual free community event held in Murwillumbah to celebrate National Families Week. The event engages Indigenous and non-Indigenous families in an event to connect families with community, culture, and Country and to link them to local supports through shared learning and participation. Kinship Festival is directed by the Kinship committee, made up of Bundjalung elders, cultural leaders and service providers. It relies on volunteers and donations. The event celebrates community and offers a range of activities, workshops and performances aimed at children, young people and families. Kinship Festival is on 27 May 2023. To support the event contact [lara@mccentre.org.au](mailto:lara@mccentre.org.au).



Ella Noah Bancroft is an Indigenous change-maker, artist, storyteller, mentor and founder of The Returning Indigenous Corporation. The Returning offers programs designed to reconnect participants back to self, community, land and our more-than-human kin through a culturally safe lens that prioritises decolonised health and wellness. The Returning is a charity that is built around inclusivity and especially access to Country, community and knowledge for First Nations people.

'I think getting Mob back on country and being involved in Indigenous-led activities based around health and wellness assists in healing trauma. A huge part of us all healing is coming home to Country, resisting assimilation and returning to our health and wellbeing through a cultural lens. This means health and wellness built around our interactions with the natural world and not with the wellbeing industry, which is exclusive, expensive and often very white,' Ella explains.

'We are returning to a more holistic view of everything interlinked, that will allow us to see that self-care will never heal our earth, it's community-care that will support in the restoration of our communities, both human and more-than-human kin,' continues Ella.

'We are always looking for support, including donations of funds, goods, services and also people can volunteer their time. You can also give us land back so we can set up our first east coast health and wellness retreat run by mob for mob,' states Ella.

It is inspiring how these First Nations women (dubay) are serving community in providing holistic healing approaches for all of community healing. First Nations understand that we heal together as a community, not in isolation, and that wellness includes a connection to Country, community, and culture.





## Exercise & Movement



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### Shirsha Marie – Tai Chi, Qigong & Warrior Spirit

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[shirsha@heartmindcentre.com.au](mailto:shirsha@heartmindcentre.com.au)  
[www.heartmindcentre.com.au](http://www.heartmindcentre.com.au)  
[www.healing.echo.net.au/listing/shirsha-marie-tai-chi-qigong](http://www.healing.echo.net.au/listing/shirsha-marie-tai-chi-qigong)

Life is like riding  
a bicycle.  
To keep your balance,  
you must keep moving

~ Albert Einstein



# Massage



## Byron Massage Clinic

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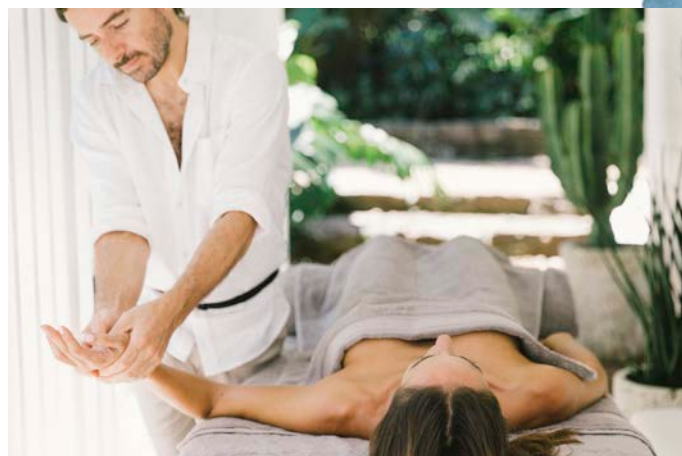
Byron Massage Clinic's therapists are a collective of experienced practitioners who have a holistic approach to health, are client-focused and offer health fund rebates/ HICAPS, so you only pay the gap on your treatments.

6/4 Bay Lane, Byron Bay

02 6685 6107

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## Thai Sabai Traditional Thai Massage & Foot Spa

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# One for yoga, yoga for all!

## Adel Pheloung

Yoga is a mental, spiritual, and physical practice that originated from ancient India, and is now popular worldwide due to the health and relaxation benefits associated with regular participation. Those of us from the Northern Rivers are no strangers to the idea of yoga, with its benefits having been readily adopted by many members of this rainbow community. Luckily for us, there are a wide variety of yoga programs within our reach, with a practice for everyone.

An innovative Indigenous yoga resource has been distributed at the Murwillumbah Community Centre (MCC) since 2020 – the Bunyarabugalma (to make well – make healthy) DVD. Created by Aboriginal Elders and cultural facilitators of the Guyahyn Aboriginal Playgroup and the Kids Caring For Country after school program at the MCC, the Bunyarabugalma program incorporates traditional yogic philosophies with Bundjalung culture.

Regular yoga practice has many benefits, especially for younger children. However, as yoga originates from India, the poses and stories often include animals that are not native to Australia, for example, tigers. Bunyarabugalma involves therapeutic breathing incorporated with traditional dance postures, and the Bundjalung words for that animal or landform. Lara Lei, the local Indigenous programs coordinator, wanted to utilise the positive impacts of yoga, whilst teaching local children and their families how to stay connected to Country. All of the movements have modified versions that allow older or disabled participants to take part in an Aboriginal-led program that prioritises the wellbeing and culture of First Nations people.

The most commonly practised yoga styles in the West are Hatha and Vinyasa yoga, which most of us in this region will have heard of, seen, or participated in. Hatha yoga involves slowly and deliberately moving your body into different poses, whilst mindfully focusing on the breath, where Vinyasa yoga connects the breath to movement at a faster pace, in a constant flow. But there are many different styles of yoga that can also be found throughout the Northern Rivers and beyond.

For example, Raman Das, of the YATAN Holistic Ayurvedic Centre in Sydney, regularly travels to Byron Bay and Townsville to teach his own YATAN Yoga, a 'uniquely integrated system of health care which combines traditional yogic techniques with modern scientific knowledge'. YATAN Yoga involves more than just postures and pranayama (breathing techniques), and teaches meditation, diet, lifestyle choices and tantric philosophies.

Numerous yoga centres offer yoga alongside other exercise and health therapies; BodyMindLife's Byron Bay studio offers yoga and pilates, with access to a sauna, and Byron's Bodyhealz Recovery Studio takes this even further, with 'yoga-inspired exercise-based physiotherapy', sauna use, hydroxytherapy, massage and pilates.

## Mind as well as body

Yoga can also make great progress in healing the mind, with many yoga centres in the region now offering yoga from a trauma-sensitive perspective. Nourished Soul Now, in Mullumbimby, offers yoga sessions that work to heal and soothe the nervous system, through gentle movement, breath awareness and meditation. The Yoga for Resilience program is specifically designed to 'increase the wellbeing of those who are living with stress, anxiety, depression or trauma'.

Further afield, trauma-informed yoga has had success with some of the most marginalised members of the community; prisoners. The Yoga on the Inside program delivers yoga across nine Australian correctional facilities. The Townsville Women's Correctional Centre is just one of the facilities that has access to classes that are designed to assist 'people who are experiencing (or have experienced) significant difficulties within their lives'.

Yoga on the Inside has also delivered programs to youth centres and domestic violence victims. The benefits for the incarcerated that undertake these programs is beginning to be realised, with anecdotally calmer temperaments amongst inmates that practise yoga. A US study (albeit undertaken by the Yoga Behind Bars project itself) indicated that only eight per cent of individuals who took four or more yoga classes reoffended, compared to the national recidivism rates of 60 per cent – this work could ultimately reduce the cost to society, as there would be less people in incarceration.

As the many programs available in the Northern Rivers and beyond prove, there is a form of yoga available for everyone. The science-based benefits of yoga: improved flexibility; stress relief; more balanced mental health; reduced inflammation; increased strength, self-esteem, brain functioning, sleep, balance, and immunity, can be accessed by anyone in this wellbeing-centric region, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, medical conditions, past life experiences, and so forth.

Shall we unleash our inner yogi?







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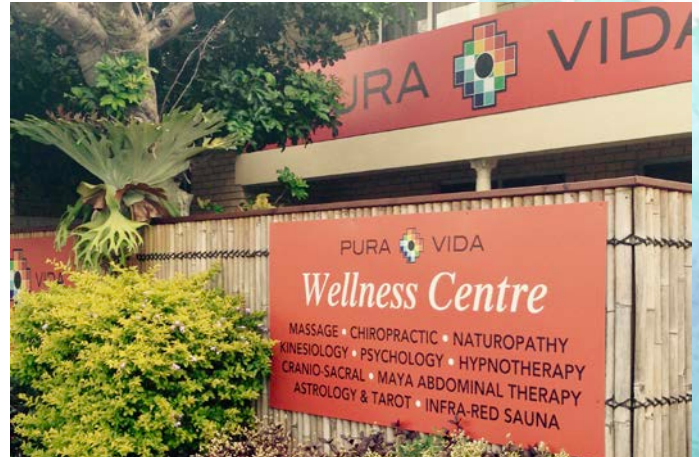
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# The not-so-new drugs on the block –

## Mandy Nolan

‘Turn on, tune in and drop out’. Those were the infamous words of American psychologist Timothy Leary, the world’s leading campaigner for psychedelic drug research and use. He became synonymous with counterculture in the 1960s, was the most famous proponent of the therapeutic and spiritual benefits of LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide also known as acid). He died almost three decades ago, but now it looks like the ‘vision splendid’ he foretold, about the immense benefits of psychedelic-assisted therapy, is upon us. The legacy of the age of Aquarius has arrived!

From 1 July, 2023 the TGA (Therapeutic Goods Administration) will be rescheduling psilocybin and MDMA (methylenedioxymethamphetamine also known as ecstasy) in the Poisons Standard, a record of decisions on the classification of medicines and chemicals. In short this means that psychiatrists who are given approval from the TGA will be able to prescribe psilocybin (derived from ‘magic mushrooms’) for treatment-resistant depression and MDMA for PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder).

Psilocybin-assisted therapy has yielded remarkable clinical results for depression and anxiety in numerous trials at leading universities internationally. Psilocybin-assisted therapy can lead to remission in 60-80 per cent of cases of anxiety and depression, whereas current existing treatments lead to remission in a maximum of 35-42 per cent of cases. (Griffiths et al., 2016; Ross, 2016; Carhart-Harris, 2016).

## Struggling to find treatments

Over 2.2 million Australians have been diagnosed with mental health conditions including anxiety and depression, with diagnosis of the latter being on the increase. Clinicians are struggling to find treatments that work. With almost double the positive results of existing clinical treatment, psychedelic-assisted therapy has created a ripple of excitement in the therapeutic community.

Benjamin Gilmour, local paramedic and graduate of MMI’s Certificate in Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy (CPAT), completed a six-month course which included 90 hours under the supervision of psychologists. The course was

speculative, as no one is really sure how things are going to operate once TGA approvals are in place.

But Mr Gilmour, like many others in the health sector, is excited about the therapy’s potential.

‘I was motivated by my desire to find more effective lasting treatments for patients with depression, anxiety, and PTSD,’ he says.

‘When it comes to mental health, the conventional medical system has been less than satisfactory for many. As a paramedic it seemed like a revolving door. I see the same patients with depression, anxiety and PTSD over and over again. Antidepressant SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) can be effective for some people to an extent, but these patients would commonly describe a lack of joy in their lives. They felt numb to the enjoyment of life. And suicide remains a huge issue in this country.’

‘In almost all the studies thus far, psychedelics have shown to be very effective in breaking people out of repetitive and rigid ways of thinking. Some of the benefits include: increased empathy for others; compassion for self; profound and novel insights about one’s character, or life, or the world; feelings of deep connectedness with others; a sense of meaningfulness; and, in the best-case scenario people can have a profound ‘mystical’ experience. So far the results from psychedelic studies have been truly remarkable. About 122 psychedelic and MDMA research trials have recently been completed or are currently active,’ says Mr Gilmour.

Psychedelic-assisted therapy typically involves the ingestion of a classical psychedelic, such as psilocybin found in magic mushrooms, combined with integration therapy in the days and weeks afterwards. A common therapeutic approach during the actual psychedelic sessions he tells me is ‘non-directive’.





# are they part of the healing journey?

## More than just a 'trip'

'With psilocybin in particular, it [the therapeutic approach] is attentive but usually silent, supporting the emerging process, offering assistance and guidance if needed, with little analysis of the material.'

The analysis happens later. The model used in trials, which will be replicated to the clinical setting overseen by psychiatrists, will involve three distinct phases:

1. Preparation therapy.
2. The psychedelic experience.
3. Integration therapy.

'The therapy element of this approach is absolutely essential for both effectiveness and safety,' says Mr Gilmour.

'In other words, just taking a psychedelic alone without adequate prep or integration is not only a missed opportunity, but can result in harm.'

## So who is the most suitable person to participate in the therapy?

'People who have been diagnosed with, or feel they have, unprocessed trauma, grief, PTSD, or anxiety. However, so far the TGA has only approved use for treatment-resistant depression and PTSD. Even so, there is also great benefit for people outside of mental illness, for the resolution of an existential crisis, for example, or for creative stimulation. But it's my personal view that psychedelics are not for recreational use, or a magic way of getting what you want, like making your rich, or for taking lightly. These are powerful and sacred plant medicines here to help us evolve, to raise our consciousness, bring us in tune with our higher selves and with nature. They are not here to galvanise the ego, but rather dissolve it,' concludes Mr Gilmour.

With the TGA's decision to reschedule psilocybin and MDMA from 1 July 2023, psychologists are looking into how to practise with these treatments.

'The question even the TGA and the college of psychiatrists are trying to work out is how this is going to work,' says Mr Gilmour.

'Psychiatrists generally have a pharmacological approach to mental health and leave the psychotherapeutic aspects to psychologists and psychotherapists. What the TGA and the college have recognised is that psychedelic medicines cannot be used in the same way that antidepressants are used. They are not take-home meds. They are actually vehicles for psychotherapy. They must be used in conjunction with a psychotherapeutic plan. The problem is we only have a couple of hundred clinicians trained so far in Australia, less than half of them actual therapists. The rest are registered social workers, nurses, paramedics and so on. The college of psychiatrists or the Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) will have to decide on the make-up of the therapy teams and what required training will look like.'

The psychedelic community believes that integration is a vital component of psychedelic therapy.

'Integration is a process of actively making sense of, or working through, translating and processing the content of a psychedelic experience' says Mr Gilmour.

'I have to say that, while there are some really great underground psychedelic facilitators, integration has been largely lacking in that space. Many of us know people who have done a bunch of psychedelics and are walking around completely confused and sometimes quite unwell. That's usually because integration has been neglected. These individuals are carrying around a huge load of dredged up material from their subconscious, often very traumatic stuff, and have had no support to make sense of it. This is not a reflection on the psychedelic, rather a reflection of lack of integration. And this is why, in my view, the clinical model is so valuable.'

To date, the biological mechanisms underlying the complex psychoactive effects of psychedelic drugs remain poorly understood. While the acute presentation of a psilocybin-intoxicated individual closely resembles psychosis, hallucinogens such as psilocybin are not thought to precipitate a new psychotic illness, but rather may unmask a psychotic disorder in those who are susceptible.

Ironically, some 60 years ago, counterculture may have opened the door to a medicine that has the potential for profound impact on the improved mental health of many in our community. Maybe come 1 July we may finally understand Leary's therapeutic directive.

I'm staying tuned in.







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## Healing Practitioners



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# Eat good mood food

## – a healthy gut helps a healthy life

### Eve Jeffery

Many people think that the gut is something to do with the intestines or maybe even the stomach, but dietitian Rachel Jeffery tells us that the gut process begins the moment we put something in our mouth – digestion starts with mastication, the mixture of chewing and saliva, and this is where a healthy gut life starts.

The journey from point A to point B (appetite to butt) has many stops along the way and the latest nutritional information tells us that there needs to be a combination of 30 different plant foods eaten a week to keep our gut healthy.

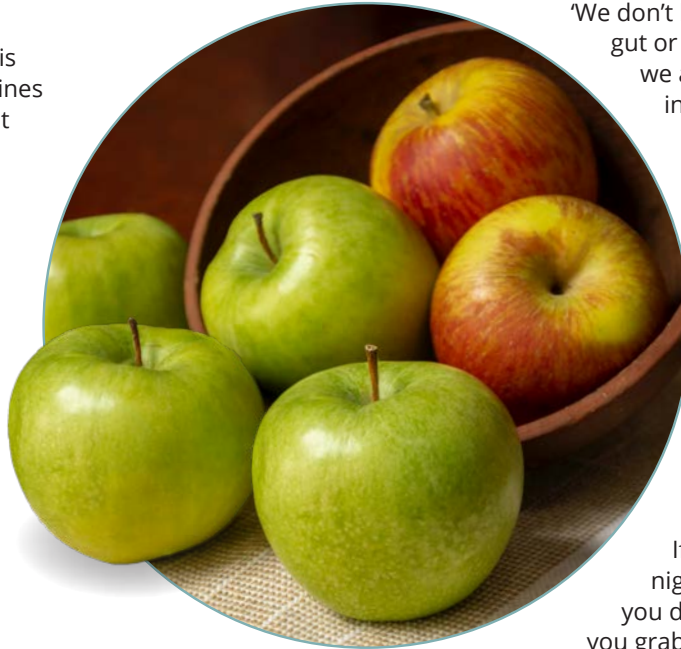
Unlike blood or DNA, there is not necessarily any relationship between families when it comes to your gut microbiome (biological community). Environmental factors including hygiene habits, pets, lifestyle, and even the difference between swimming in the ocean, a creek, or the backyard pool, can have very varying effects and create a particular habitat for the gut microbiome in individuals.

Dietitian Rachel Jeffery says that in terms of good gut health, it's not just about eating. 'It's eating – including plenty of fluids, exercise, stress management, and sleep. It's important to eat well and it's important to keep up your fluids. Stress management has a lot to answer for in gut health and we all know how important exercise is for all aspects of good health.

'In terms of eating, what we know is the more different types of food you eat, the better. Try to get 30 different plant products in a week. When each of the foods is digested in the gut, they help feed different microorganisms – the microbiome. A variety of plant foods helps feed different microbiomes. To keep it healthy it's best to have a large variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grain cereals, even including things like herbs, spices, and so forth.'

Bad gut health can affect other parts of the body. Rachel says there's a thing called the gut-brain axis (GBA).

'There's a highway of communication, between the brain and the gut. The best way to explain that is: if you're asleep at night and you get that 3am phone call, you can feel your "tummy", your gut, starting to churn, or if you're going for an important interview, you can feel that churning – there's a sort of a conversation-communication highway between the two.



'We don't know if the brain affects the gut or the other way around, but we all know, that if you feel bad in your tummy you just feel generally crap. This affects your mood and what you want to do for that day. If you're feeling healthy and you've eaten well – if you've had a good poop – you're not feeling the pain of being "blocked up", you feel good and you get on with your day.

'Gut health can affect how productive you are. Add to that the sleep component. If you've had a really crappy night's sleep, you wake up late, you don't eat a good breakfast and you grab a coffee and a doughnut on the way to work – you've already started to have a bad day in the sense that they're not eating the normal good gut foods. That can then have a knock-on effect. You often hear people say, "I was tired after work and I didn't want to cook so I grabbed a pizza on the way home". That can actually make you feel worse afterward. Eating poorly can make us feel bad.'

Rachel says that food that doesn't make us feel good – making us constipated, bloated, or in pain – can affect us as well.

'There is a potential link between our gut health and our mental health. There is still a lot being looked into. We are learning that gut health may influence a lot of health and lifestyle diseases. What we do know is that there may be links to the way how healthy your gut is and other diseases. It's early days but science is looking at things like inflammatory bowel diseases – Ulcerative Colitis and Crohn's disease. Does our gut health actually affect those diseases? We are still learning more.'

Rachel says if you have symptoms or are worried your first stop is your GP.

'It's always good to visit your doctor who can do baseline screening with bloods and a stool test – to make sure you haven't any bad bugs.'

If you've got a happy gut, you are more likely to be a happy person. As Rachel says: 'Eat good mood food'.

• Rachel Jeffery is an Accredited Practicing Dietitian and a specialist in Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Endometriosis, Fertility, Pregnancy and Women's Health.



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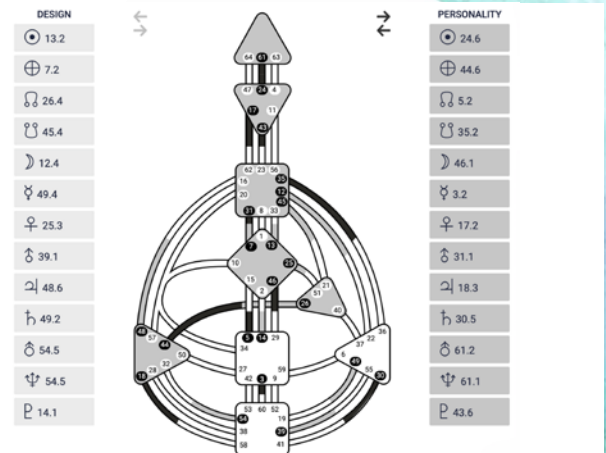
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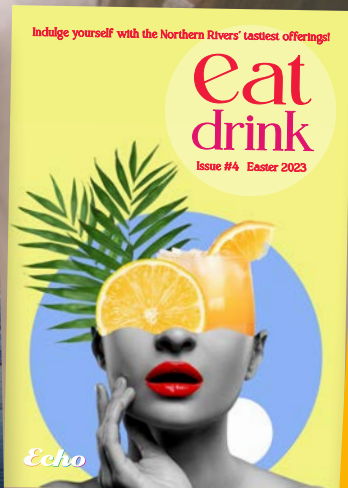
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