STRETCHLEARN · WORKBOOK

Gut Health — Workbook

This workbook translates the evidence-based principles from the Gut Health course into structured exercises, reflective prompts, and practical templates you can use immediately. Work through each section alongside the corresponding module, and return to the action plan and templates as living documents you update over time. Everything here is general educational guidance — consult a qualified healthcare provider for any persistent or severe digestive symptoms.

The Gut Microbiome — What It Is and Why It Matters

Anchor your understanding of the microbiome by assessing your current gut health baseline and exploring the factors that have shaped your microbial community.

Exercise: My Microbiome History Timeline

Map the key events across your life that science links to microbiome shaping — antibiotics, diet changes, stress periods, births, travel, medications. Reflect on what this reveals about your current gut baseline.

• List every antibiotic course you can recall (approximate age, reason if known). Note how long after each course your digestion felt normal.

• Describe how your diet changed during the two most stressful periods of your life. What digestive symptoms appeared during those times?

• Rate your current microbial diversity on a 1–10 scale based on the number of distinct plant species you ate last week. What drove that number — habits, convenience, or preference?

• Which modifiable driver (diet, sleep, stress, exercise) do you believe most needs improvement in your life right now, and why?

Worksheet: Baseline Gut Health Self-Assessment

Complete this worksheet before starting the course dietary changes. Revisit it at the end of Week 4 and Week 8 to track changes. This is a self-monitoring tool, not a clinical assessment.

Average bowel movements per week

Stool consistency (Bristol Stool Scale score 1–7)

Frequency of bloating (days per week, 0–7)

Frequency of abdominal discomfort (days per week, 0–7)

Estimated plant species eaten in a typical week

Estimated daily fibre intake (grams, approximate)

Servings of fermented food per typical day

Average nightly sleep (hours)

Perceived stress level (1 = very low, 10 = very high)

Exercise frequency (days per week and type)

Checklist: Microbiome-Friendly Daily Baseline Habits

[ ] I eat at least 5 distinct plant species today
[ ] I drink 8+ glasses of water throughout the day
[ ] I avoid eating ultra-processed food as the majority of any meal
[ ] I take any prescribed medication at the same time each day to maintain circadian consistency
[ ] I go to sleep and wake at consistent times (within 30 minutes of my target)
[ ] I spend at least 10 minutes outdoors or in movement today

Fibre — The Foundation of Gut Health

Build your practical fibre-literacy skills and design the week of eating that will sustainably move you toward 30 g of fibre and 30 plants per week.

Exercise: Your 30-Plants-Per-Week Audit

Recall everything you ate in the past 7 days as accurately as possible. List every distinct plant species, then score yourself. Use the reflection prompts to identify your easiest upgrade pathways.

• Write out every plant species you ate this past week. Count them. What is your current weekly plant count?

• Which meal slot (breakfast, lunch, or dinner) is your lowest plant-diversity slot? What one change this week could add 3 more species to that slot?

• List three herbs or spices you already enjoy but rarely use. How could you incorporate them into meals you already cook regularly?

Worksheet: 7-Day Plant Diversity Tracker

Use this tracker every day for one week. Mark each distinct plant species in the day column when you eat it. At the end of the week, count your total unique species — the goal is 30+.

Plant species eaten — Monday

Plant species eaten — Tuesday

Plant species eaten — Wednesday

Plant species eaten — Thursday

Plant species eaten — Friday

Plant species eaten — Saturday

Plant species eaten — Sunday

Total unique plant species this week

Estimated total fibre (grams) this week

Biggest gap identified (meal or category)

Checklist: Fibre-Building Weekly Actions

[ ] I replace at least one refined grain portion this week with an intact whole grain (oats, brown rice, barley, quinoa)
[ ] I add legumes to at least one meal per day (lentils, chickpeas, black beans, edamame)
[ ] I include at least one prebiotic-rich food daily (garlic, onion, leek, asparagus, or Jerusalem artichoke)
[ ] I include a resistant-starch source at least 3 times this week (cooked-and-cooled potato, green banana, legumes)
[ ] I increase my fibre intake by no more than 5 g per day per week to avoid digestive discomfort
[ ] I increase water intake in proportion to any fibre increase
[ ] I track my plant species count each evening before bed

Exercise: Design Your Gut Health Plate

Using the Gut Health Plate formula from the course, plan 3 specific meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) that you will cook this week. Be specific about exact ingredients, species counts, and estimated fibre grams per meal.

• Plan your highest-fibre breakfast using the plate formula. List every ingredient, the plant species each contributes, and your estimated fibre total.

• Plan a lunch that incorporates a fermented food added at the table (not cooked in). What is your legume or whole grain base, what vegetables, what fermented food, and what prebiotic element?

• Plan a dinner that uses at least 4 distinct vegetables. Which cooking method will you use, and how will you add at least one herb or spice not already on your regular rotation?

Fermented Foods and Probiotics

Systematically introduce fermented foods at a pace your gut can adapt to, and evaluate your options based on quality, availability, and personal tolerance.

Worksheet: Fermented Food Introduction Log

Use this log across 6 weeks as you gradually build your fermented food intake. Note each new fermented food you try, your tolerance, and any symptoms — this is your personalised adaptation record.

Week number (1–6)

Fermented foods consumed this week (list each)

Number of daily servings this week

Any bloating or gas noted (yes/no, severity 1–5)

Any other symptoms noted

Favourite fermented food this week

New fermented food tried this week

Planned adjustment for next week

Exercise: Synbiotic Meal Planning

Design 3 synbiotic meal combinations — pairing a probiotic fermented food with its preferred prebiotic substrate — using ingredients you actually like and can access. Reference the synbiotic examples from Module 3.

• Design a synbiotic breakfast combining a kefir or yogurt base with at least one prebiotic fibre source. What are the specific ingredients and what probiotic-prebiotic pairing does it create?

• Design a synbiotic lunch that uses kimchi or sauerkraut as the probiotic component paired with a legume-based prebiotic base. What is the full meal?

• Create your own synbiotic combination using a fermented food and prebiotic ingredient not covered in any course example. Explain why you chose this pairing.

Checklist: Fermented Food Quality Checklist

[ ] I check that yogurt or kefir is refrigerated and lists live bacterial strains on the label
[ ] I choose sauerkraut and kimchi from the refrigerated section (not canned or ambient shelf)
[ ] My kombucha contains fewer than 5 g of sugar per 250 ml serving
[ ] I add miso to dishes after cooking, not during, to preserve live cultures
[ ] I rotate at least 3 different fermented food types across the week
[ ] I avoid probiotic supplements as a replacement for fermented whole foods unless specifically recommended by a healthcare provider
[ ] I have identified one fermented food I am willing to make at home and found a recipe

Recognising Dysbiosis and Building Long-Term Gut Habits

Identify your personal dysbiosis risk factors, design your 7-day gut reset, and build a sustainable long-term gut health protocol tailored to your lifestyle.

Exercise: My Dysbiosis Risk Assessment

Honest self-reflection on the dietary and lifestyle factors most likely contributing to any current gut imbalance. Use this as a constructive diagnostic tool, not a source of guilt.

• Looking at the dysbiosis dietary drivers from the course (ultra-processed food, low fibre, processed meat, artificial sweeteners, alcohol, antibiotics) — which two are most present in your current diet? Be specific about frequency and amount.

• Describe your typical weekly movement pattern. Does it meet the 150 min/week moderate-intensity target associated with butyrate-producing bacteria increases?

• Rate your average sleep quality and consistency on a 1–10 scale. What is the single biggest sleep disruptor in your life, and what is one realistic action to address it?

• What is your current most significant source of chronic psychological stress? What stress-reduction practice have you found most effective in the past, even if you no longer use it?

Worksheet: My 7-Day Gut Reset Plan

Fill in your personalised 7-day gut reset using the course principles. Be specific — vague plans are not followed. After the reset week, rate actual vs. planned adherence and note what you will keep permanently.

Fibre goal for the week (grams per day target)

Fermented food plan — daily serving count and which foods

Ultra-processed food boundary for the week

Daily hydration target (glasses of water)

Movement plan (days, activity type, duration)

Sleep target (bedtime, wake time, hours)

One thing to remove or minimise this week

One new food or habit to introduce this week

Actual adherence rating after the week (1–10 per category)

What I will keep as a permanent habit after this week

Checklist: Long-Term Gut Health Protocol — Monthly Review

[ ] I track my plant diversity weekly and ensure I consistently reach 30 species per week
[ ] I maintain at least 2 servings of fermented food daily as a non-negotiable habit
[ ] I aim for 30+ g of fibre daily and notice when I have a low-fibre day so I can compensate
[ ] I follow the post-antibiotic recovery protocol (high fermented food + 10 g prebiotic fibre for 2 weeks) any time I complete an antibiotic course
[ ] I rotate seasonal vegetables and fruits quarterly to prevent dietary habituation
[ ] I track bowel habits, energy, and skin health monthly as a non-invasive gut proxy
[ ] I consult a registered dietitian or physician if I experience persistent or worsening digestive symptoms not responding to dietary change

Your Action Plan

1. This week: complete the baseline gut health self-assessment worksheet and establish your plant species count for the past 7 days
2. This week: add one prebiotic food (garlic, onion, leek, or asparagus) to at least one meal per day
3. This week: introduce one serving of a high-quality fermented food daily (plain full-fat kefir or yogurt is the easiest starting point)
4. Week 2: increase to 2 fermented food servings daily and introduce a second fermented food type (sauerkraut or kimchi at 2 tbsp per meal)
5. Week 2–3: reach 30 g of fibre per day by adding legumes to one meal daily and replacing at least one refined grain with an intact whole grain

6. Week 3: conduct your 30-plants audit and fill in the 7-day plant diversity tracker; identify the meal slot with lowest plant diversity and redesign it
7. Week 4: design and execute your 7-day gut reset using the reset plan worksheet; track adherence daily
8. Week 5–6: build to 4–6 servings of varied fermented foods daily using the 6-week introduction protocol from the course
9. Month 2: establish your long-term gut health protocol using the monthly review checklist as your recurring accountability tool
10. Ongoing: rotate seasonal produce quarterly, complete your gut health self-assessment every 4 weeks, and revisit the workbook any time your digestive health shifts