



## Be Brave. Make Space.



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Hi! I'm Coach Margie  
I'm glad you're reading the Brave Space newsletter. My newsletter is written to share information and support.



### Events Coming Soon

**January 1-31:** Follow me on Facebook, IG, and/or LinkedIn for daily video tips and benefits for getting through your Dry January without suffering!

**February 1-29:** Sober Curious Small Group. Details are coming next week.

**Q1 2024:** Setting Values-Based Boundaries. Details are coming soon!

It's a good time of the year to do some cleaning and care for one of the most important if not most overlooked, parts of your body.

We just finished up the biggest party season of the year, and partaking of too many holiday spirits can leave you with an unwelcome hangover — and can also wreak havoc on your gut health.

"In addition to being a significant contributor to weight gain due to high-calorie density, alcohol can also reduce our ability to fight infections and increase the risk of developing diseases, food intolerances, and sensitivities — all as a result of poor gut health," said Dr. Gill Hart, biochemist and scientific director at

paresis, a condition that affects how you digest your food. Symptoms of this condition include nausea, heartburn, and bloating.

To reduce diabetes risk, try to reduce or avoid consuming alcoholic drinks that are higher in sugar, such as cocktails, pre-mixed drinks, alcopops, liqueurs, cider, fortified wines, and sherry.

### Liver damage

Imbalances in the gut biome are linked to gastritis, which causes the stomach lining to become inflamed, and fatty liver disease, which leads to fatty tissues affecting optimal digestive function. While only 60% of liver diseases are caused by alcohol, studies have shown that the most common cause of alcohol-

U.K.-based YorkTest, a health and wellness company that provides lab tests for food sensitivities and allergies.

## How does alcohol disrupt the gut microbiome?

"Gut health" refers to the health of your entire gastrointestinal tract, including all the bacteria within your digestive system.

When the balance of "good" and "bad" bacteria is thrown out of whack, it can have a ripple effect on all aspects of your health. Alcohol throws your bacteria balance out of whack.

Here are seven ways that alcohol can impact gut health and tips on how to reduce those negative effects:

### Immune system vulnerabilities

Alcohol impacts our gut, causing imbalances in our healthy/unhealthy gut bacteria, exacerbating gut permeability, and impacting our immune systems. A majority of the immune system — around 70% — is found in the gut. Since alcohol can compromise healthy bacteria, it's essential to take steps to protect your gut biome when you drink to protect your immune system," she said.

Focus on consuming foods rich in prebiotics, probiotics, and fiber can help to restore a healthy gut biome and support your immune system.

### Irritation from ingredients and mixers

It's not always just the alcohol (ethanol) that can irritate the gut. Sometimes other ingredients in alcoholic drinks can have negative effects, some of which aren't always obvious. The grapes, wheat, barley, hops, yeast, and other ingredients — such as fruits and dairy in cocktails and mixers — can all irritate your gut, causing inflammation. Those ingredients can also contribute to food intolerances and sensitivities, causing symptoms such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), bloating, low energy, low mood, headaches, and even skin issues like eczema or psoriasis.

related death in the U.S. is alcoholic liver disease. An estimated one in eight total deaths among U.S. adults aged 20 to 64 years is attributed to excessive alcohol use, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The best way to reduce the effect of alcohol-related liver disease is to stop drinking alcohol or stick to the recommended Dietary Guidelines for Americans, limiting intake to two drinks or less a day for men and one drink or less for women.

### Digestive issues and bloating

Excessive alcohol consumption can also inhibit the production of digestive enzymes, making it more difficult for your body to break down, digest, and absorb food. This leads to an imbalance in the gut biome, with partially digested food being a cause of bloating and gas. Focus on foods that help to optimize your gut microbiome — the 100 trillion bacteria that live in your gut that are crucial for your health. Fermented foods, such as yogurt, kefir, kimchi, and sauerkraut, contain probiotics that help to nourish and protect the gut.

### Mental health issues

The long-term effects of excessive alcohol consumption are sobering. Alcohol is a depressant — it contributes to depression, anxiety, and heightened stress levels, and its negative effects on mental health are far more than most of us are ever likely to admit. High levels of stress can inhibit the digestive system in similar ways to alcohol. Although the heightened stress levels after drinking alcohol often linger longer, making any dietary efforts to improve gut health after a drinking session less impactful.

Take time to rest and recharge after a night of drinking alcohol, in whatever way works for you. This is essential to support your mental wellness and gut health.

### Dehydration

Drinking more water or soft drinks isn't

Gassy drinks, such as mixers, often include artificial sweeteners that are not usually gut-friendly, so try to avoid these.

### Risk of diabetes

It's also important to consider the impact of the added sugars that are often present in alcoholic drinks, which are known to contribute to a higher risk of diabetes.

**Those with type 2 diabetes may have a less diverse and balanced gut biome than non-diabetic individuals.** Diabetes is the most common known cause of gastro-

going to offset the effect that alcohol has on your gut. However, if drinking more water — or soft drinks such as kombucha tea or low- to no-alcohol beverages — means drinking less alcohol, then this is the best way to reduce the risk of negative effects that alcohol can have on your gut and overall health.

**Low-alcohol or no-alcohol wine and beers make it easier to drink socially without alcohol, which is a much better choice for your health.**

*Margie*

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