



# Gut Health Course Syllabus



# Welcome to the Gut Health Course!

The gut affects nearly every system and organ in the body. Research has linked gut health to a host of chronic conditions, and many believe it holds the key to physical, emotional, and mental well-being. This course emphasizes the interconnectedness of all parts of the body, focusing on how a compromised or imbalanced gut can affect holistic well-being.

Through a mix of lectures, interactives, readings, case studies, applied learning assignments, and quizzes, you'll gain a deeper understanding of how and why gut health can be compromised, the effects this can have on the entire body, and how you can help yourself and your clients strengthen the gut microbiome and improve digestion through nutrition and lifestyle modifications.

The Gut Health Course consists of 16 modules. We recommend setting aside 4–5 hours for each module, including time to review concepts and complete the skill-building activities.



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## PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

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As leaders in the holistic nutrition and health coaching space, the Institute for Integrative Nutrition (IIN) provides continued learning opportunities to further hone your passion and skills and excel at your craft.

**By the end of this course, you will be able to:**

- Understand the gut microbiome and the role gut bacteria play in both digestion and whole-body health.
- Explain the causes and symptoms of various gut health imbalances.
- Identify nutrition and lifestyle modifications that may naturally support the health of the digestive system, gut microbiome, and systems in the body.
- Apply your knowledge to guide yourself and/or your clients to achieve greater gut health through individualized nutrition and lifestyle modifications.
- Establish your boundaries in scope of practice as a Health Coach when working with clients who have gut health concerns or conditions.
- Demonstrate how to appropriately work alongside healthcare professionals to provide a complementary service for individuals with gut imbalances or conditions.
- Synthesize your coaching skills and knowledge of gut health to create individualized approaches to guide your clients as they work to achieve optimal health.

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## COURSE FEATURES

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- **Specialized Gut Health Guides**

This feature will help deepen your understanding of gut imbalances and dietary approaches to support your clients. You'll receive four guides to common gut conditions, four guides to therapeutic diets, and two general support guides on supplements and lab testing.

- **Business Toolkit**

In addition to comprehensive handouts with optional readings and resources, you'll find 21 worksheets to print and use directly with clients as part of their gut-healing journey. Rather than creating content from scratch, you'll have these to use as part of your practice so you can focus on coaching.

- **Lifetime Access**

With lifetime access to the modules, you can continue to refresh your knowledge and skills long after you finish this course. We invite you to revisit essential course information to support yourself and your clients in the future.



# Module Overviews

On the pages that follow, you'll find a module-by-module overview of the content in the Gut Health Course.

## ORIENTATION

# Gut Health Basics

**Summary:** In order to build a solid understanding of any health topic, it's important to first know its fundamental concepts – and gut health is no exception! This module will help you get started and set yourself up for success in this course. You'll receive a preview of what you can expect to learn and come to understand why gut health is such an important area within health and wellness. You'll also explore IIN's unique approach to gut health and discover how Health Coaches can support clients around this topic from within their professional scope of practice.

### Topics Covered:

- Course welcome and overview
- The IIN approach to gut health
- The future of health
- A collaborative approach to healing the gut
- Health Coach scope of practice

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## MODULE 1

# Unlock Your Microbiome

**Summary:** The health of the gut microbiome has significant implications for whole-body well-being. In this module, you'll get an introduction to the gut as well as the microbes who call it their home! You'll discover the intimate connection between gut microbes and both proper digestion and overall health. You'll learn about germ theory and how the eradication of germs and modern standards of ultra cleanliness may be leading to a rise in chronic disease. By the end of this module, you'll understand how to best nourish your gut microbes to keep them diversified and minimize harm.

### Topics Covered:

- The role of the gut microbiome
- Functions of gut bacteria
- Dysbiosis
- Microbiome-balancing nutrition
- Germ theory
- Keys to microbial health

## MODULE 2

# Optimize Your Digestion

**Summary:** Adequately digesting the food you eat is essential for optimal nourishment. In this module, you'll explore the digestive system, looking at everything from its anatomy and physiology to the types and phases of digestion. You'll understand how nutrients are absorbed during digestion and learn about the hormones involved in the digestive process. By the end of this module, you'll be able to effectively inquire about a client's digestion and their relationship to eating as a key step toward achieving optimal gut health.

### Topics Covered:

- Digestive organs and enzymes
- The three phases of digestion
- Mechanical and chemical digestion
- Hormones involved in digestion
- Nutrient digestion and absorption
- Factors affecting healthy digestion



## MODULE 3

# Healthy Bowel Movements

**Summary:** While bowel movements are seldom discussed in everyday conversation, it's an important topic in the context of health coaching! In this module, you'll review why stool quality is an important indicator of what might be happening in the digestive system. You'll learn about the different types of stool, how to identify a healthy bowel movement, and signs of possible digestive issues. By the end of this module, you'll understand how to encourage clients to converse freely about their bowel movements and how to support them in improving bowel movement quality through nutrition and lifestyle changes.

### Topics Covered:

- The Bristol Stool Chart
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Supporting a healthy bowel movement
- Laxatives

## MODULE 4

# Eating for Your Gut

**Summary:** Nutrition has the potential to create better gut health and promote overall well-being. In this module, you'll focus on foods, spices, and herbs that support healthy gut bacteria and review gut-irritating foods to crowd out more often. You'll also learn gut-friendly food preparation methods and tips for navigating restaurants with dietary restrictions. By the end of this module, you'll have a clear understanding of which foods best nourish a healthy gut microbiome.

### Topics Covered:

- Dining out with dietary restrictions
- Pillars of eating for gut health
- Gut-supporting herbs and spices
- Polyphenols and antioxidants

## MODULE 5

# The Impact of Stress

**Summary:** Stress is one of the biggest disruptors of gut health. In this module, you'll learn exactly how chronic stress impacts the microbiome and a person's ability to properly digest food. You'll discover the power of positive emotions, mindful eating, and primary food for helping clients soothe their nervous systems and support a healthy gut microbiome. By the end of this module, you'll be ready to help clients better manage their stress to enhance their digestive health.

### Topics Covered:

- The connection between stress and gut health
- Types of stress
- The autonomic nervous system
- Mindful mealtime makeovers
- Adaptogens
- Stress management

## MODULE 6

# The Gut-Brain Connection

**Summary:** Due to its complex function and vast communication network, the gut is often referred to as the second brain. In this module, you'll explore the intelligence of the gut and its connection to mood, emotions, and the brain. You'll learn about the vagus nerve and review lifestyle practices that strengthen vagal tone for nervous system balance and digestive vitality. You'll also look at irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), a common condition related to gut-brain axis dysfunction. By the end of this module, you'll understand how to help clients support their gut-brain connection through nutrition and lifestyle practices.

### Topics Covered:

- The gut-brain connection
- Introduction to the vagus nerve
- Vagal tone and gut health
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Supporting clients with IBS
- The Low-FODMAP Diet



## MODULE 7

# Improve Your Immunity

**Summary:** The majority of the immune system resides in the gut. In this module, you'll look at the intimate connection between the immune system and gut health. You'll learn what happens when immunity is compromised and how autoimmune conditions develop. You'll also understand how anti-inflammatory eating approaches and lifestyle changes can enhance quality of life for clients with autoimmune conditions. By the end of this module, you'll be able to recognize several autoimmune conditions tied to gut health.

### Topics Covered:

- The innate and adaptive immune systems
- The gut-immune system connection
- Autoimmune disease
- Predictive autoimmunity
- Celiac disease and gluten
- The Specific Carbohydrate Diet

## MODULE 8

# Common Digestive Problems

**Summary:** Food allergies and intolerances are at the root of many digestive issues. In this module, you'll explore the differences between food allergies and food intolerances and learn testing methods for each. You'll look at increased intestinal permeability, or leaky gut, and learn about eating approaches that can help clients navigate this condition. By the end of this module, you'll have a solid understanding of leaky gut and best practices for strengthening the gut lining.

### Topics Covered:

- Food allergies and intolerances
- Food intolerance testing
- The Elimination Diet
- Leaky gut
- The GAPS Diet

**Course Reminder:** Your first test opens this week. You're allowed two hours per attempt and two attempts per test. You have two weeks from when the test opens to complete it. You must pass with a score of 70% or higher to graduate.

## MODULE 9

# Balance Your Body

**Summary:** Rates of obesity and disorders related to high blood sugar and inflammation are rising rapidly. In this module, you'll discover the roles blood sugar, inflammation, and obesity play in the health of the gut. You'll consider its role in obesity, weight loss, and blood sugar balance. By the end of this module, you'll understand how Health Coaches can support clients with weight management by bolstering the health of their gut.

### Topics Covered:

- Body fat and inflammation
- The gut-microbe weight connection
- Blood sugar
- Introduction to diabetes
- Nutrition for blood sugar balance

**MODULE 10**

# Fungal Overgrowth

**Summary:** Candida is typically talked about in a negative context, but a small amount of candida in the gut is normal – and actually a good thing! In this module, you'll learn what happens when an imbalance in the body triggers candida overgrowth. You'll explore some common overgrowth conditions that manifest as skin issues that can be traced back to the gut. By the end of this module, you'll understand nutrition and lifestyle modifications that can promote greater balance and help control candida overgrowth.

**Topics Covered:**

- Understanding candida
- Biofilms
- Nutrition and lifestyle for candida management
- The Body Ecology Diet
- Gut-related skin conditions



**MODULE 11**

# Digestive Discomfort

**Summary:** Many individuals are living with conditions causing digestive discomfort on a daily basis. In this module, you'll learn about small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO) and how Health Coaches can support clients as they undergo medical treatment for it. You'll also explore several types of esophageal discomfort and the role stomach acid plays in each. By the end of this module, you'll understand the connection between SIBO and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), their symptoms, and how you can guide clients in preventing flare-ups.

**Topics Covered:**

- Small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO)
- The migrating motor complex
- Supporting clients with SIBO
- Intermittent fasting
- Acid reflux and heartburn
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)
- Natural support for heartburn

## MODULE 12

# Gut-Hormone Connection

**Summary:** Your hormones and gut are closely tied and both systems can significantly impact your emotional, physical, and mental health. In this module, you'll dive into the intricate connection between hormones and the gut. You'll focus on the thyroid and estrogen and understand how each plays a role in digestion and microbiome balance. You'll discover the gut-estrogen connection and learn steps to balance excess estrogen production. By the end of this module, you'll be able to guide clients in promoting thyroid health and estrogen balance by way of a healthy gut.

### Topics Covered:

- Thyroid dysfunction
- The gut-thyroid connection
- Supporting a healthy thyroid
- The estrobolome
- Estrogen balance

## MODULE 13

# Reduce Toxin Exposure

**Summary:** Toxins are known for disrupting the delicate balance within the gut microbiome. In this module, you'll learn why reducing exposure to toxins and supporting the body's detoxification process can have a huge impact on gut health. You'll review ways to safely support natural detoxification and adopt a detox lifestyle. By the end of this module, you'll have a solid understanding of how environmental toxins can disrupt gut health. You'll also be better equipped to guide clients toward food, environmental, and personal product choices with lower toxin levels.

### Topics Covered:

- The role of the gut in detox
- Natural detoxification
- The detox lifestyle
- Nutrient density for detoxification

**MODULE 14**

# Probiotics and Supplements

**Summary:** While nutrient-dense foods and a balanced lifestyle provide the foundation for a healthy gut and overall wellness, there are other factors to consider. In this module, you'll discover how dietary supplements, such as probiotics, can offer some individuals an extra boost to achieve optimal health. You'll explore different types of supplements and probiotics and learn how to identify high-quality supplements. By the end of this module, you'll be ready to navigate the supplement aisle and explain the benefits of probiotics, synbiotics, and fermented foods in nourishing the gut.

**Topics Covered:**

- Selecting quality dietary supplements
- Top supplements for gut health
- Supplements and scope of practice
- Prebiotics, probiotics, and synbiotics
- Common probiotic myths
- Fermented foods



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**MODULE 15**

# Alternative Approaches

**Summary:** When it comes to the gut, there isn't one way to health. In this module, you'll dive into the age-old health philosophies of Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and how they can support the gut. You'll explore the three doshas and five elements of Ayurveda and how they relate to gut imbalances. You'll see how TCM concepts, like qi, yin, and yang, can relate to gut health and digestion. By the end of this module, you'll know how to incorporate Eastern ideas and alternative practices into your gut health toolkit and support clients who work with Ayurveda and TCM practitioners.

## Topics Covered:

- Ayurveda for gut health
- The doshas and dosha imbalances
- Principles of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)
- Yin and yang: functions, organs, and foods
- Alternative gut health therapies

**MODULE 16**

# Work with Practitioners

**Summary:** As a Health Coach, it's important to be mindful of your scope of practice so you can establish expectations and understand how to coach within the boundaries of your profession. In this module, you'll learn how to collaborate with various healthcare practitioners to create more powerful outcomes for your clients. You'll also learn the basics of lab testing, a diagnostic and tracking tool many clients ask about, and how Health Coaches can work with healthcare providers in this area. By the end of this module, you'll be ready to empower clients to achieve better gut health.

**Topics Covered:**

- Collaborating with healthcare practitioners
- Related healthcare professions and their roles
- Establishing partnerships in the healthcare community
- Lab testing
- Common lab tests for digestive and gut health

**Course Reminder:** Your second test opens this week. You're allowed two hours per attempt and two attempts per test. You have two weeks from when the test opens to complete it. You must pass with a score of 70% or higher to graduate.

## COURSE SUPPORT

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If you have content questions or need help with payments or technical issues, reach out to the Student Success team at [support@guthealthcourse.com](mailto:support@guthealthcourse.com). A dedicated member of our team will get back to you as soon as possible.

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

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**Completion of the Gut Health Course requires the following:**

- **Tests:** There are two tests in this course. You'll find them alongside Modules 8 and 16. You must pass each test with a score of 70% or higher to graduate.
- **Tuition Payments:** You must be up to date with tuition payments to graduate. Please review the My Payments page of the Learning Center for tuition policies and fees.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

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National Board-Certified Health and Wellness Coaches will earn continuing education credits by successfully completing this course. These credits will count toward the NBHWC recertification requirements.



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