

**Press Release**  
**Wednesday 8th June 2022**

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**Choosing the right diet is key to a healthy gut!**

The gut was the focus of the latest event in the Online Masterclass Series hosted by the International Stress Management Association (ISMA<sup>UK</sup>) on 26<sup>th</sup> May. The guest speaker was Dr Sarah Schenker, a leading dietitian, public health nutritionist, writer and broadcaster. Sarah was in conversation with fellow nutritionist Abbie Alston and the event was sponsored by PrecisionBiotics who, through their sponsorship, are helping ISMA<sup>UK</sup> continue their work promoting sound knowledge and best practice in stress management, wellbeing and performance.

Sarah explained that, in one sense, there is nothing new about the gut microbiome: we have evolved, from the moment we are born, to live with microbes over millions of years. It is a collective term for trillions of bacteria, viruses and fungi that exist in the body. She said there are approximately 40 million bacterial cells, predominantly in the large intestine, and most of them are extremely important for health. But various factors can influence the gut microbiome including diet, illness and stress.

She pointed out that emerging research on gut dysbiosis – an imbalance between healthy and unhealthy microbes – shows that health can be adversely impacted. Healthy bacteria in the microbiome can improve gut health and help prevent ‘leaky gut syndrome’, a condition in which disease-causing bacteria stick to the walls of the gut. The gut microbiome can help control blood sugar levels, reducing the risk of diabetes, and unhealthy bacteria in the gut can affect heart health. Toxins produced by unhealthy bacteria can cause inflammation when passed into the blood, and this is associated with brain disorders such as depression. An altered gut microbiome has been observed in people with mental health disorders, while lengthy periods of stress can also negatively affect it.

Sarah talked about the strong connection between the gut and the brain via what is known as the gut-brain axis. For instance, stress affects the stomach which affects the brain (an example is experiencing butterflies in the stomach). The gut and brain are also connected via neurotransmitters, produced by the brain as well as by microbes in the gut cells, to control our feelings and emotions.

Diet is a vital area in which the gut microbiome plays a role. For example, getting enough fibre can help with preventing Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s Diseases. Sarah highlighted nutrients that can have a positive impact on mental health by increasing levels of serotonin. They are found in fatty acids (such as oily fish) and amino acids (such as turkey, eggs, cheese). In fact, giving greater thought to your diet is key to good health: if your diet is based 80% around the right foods, you can influence your gut microbiome, which in turn will help you to better health. The Mediterranean diet is a good guide.

In summary, Sarah said that our emphasis should be on eating a diverse range of foods including plant-based and fermented foods and limiting our intake of artificial sweeteners. Our diet should include prebiotic foods (such as bananas, asparagus, apples), foods rich in polyphenols (such as whole grains, dark chocolate, olive oil, green tea, and red wine – in moderation of course!), and strain-specific probiotic supplements. Certain probiotic strains have been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety in people with clinical depression.

She suggested that we should all do some research to find out what works best for us. Through what we eat, we can influence our gut microbiome, which in turn will deliver health benefits and reduce the risk of mental and physical illnesses.

Carole Spiers, Chair of ISMA<sup>UK</sup>, said, ‘We were delighted to welcome Dr Sarah Schenker and Abbie Alston as speakers at our latest Online Masterclass. It was fascinating to learn about the gut-brain axis and how, by following an appropriate diet, we can reduce mental disease and stress – clearly key concerns for ISMA<sup>UK</sup> - as well as physical illnesses. We are also excited to announce that PrecisionBiotics, experts in the human microbiome for over 20 years, are sponsoring the work we do in promoting knowledge and best practice in stress management’.

## **Notes for Editors**

### **About PrecisionBiotics**

PrecisionBiotics have over 20 years’ experience of researching the human microbiome. Amongst the areas in which their research is being applied is stress and sleep: with recent advances and interest in the gut-brain axis, they are focused on the development of evidence-based probiotics for the management of stress, stress-related fatigue, cognition and learning. As part of Novozymes OneHealth, the human health unit of one of the world’s leading biotech companies, they can extend their dedication to finding sustainable solutions for future generations, empowering people to live healthier, happier lives. For more information visit [Precision Biotics UK](https://www.precisionbiotics.com).

### **About ISMA<sup>UK</sup>**

ISMA<sup>UK</sup> is the leading professional body for workplace and personal stress management, wellbeing and performance, promoting sound knowledge and best practice in stress management, resilience, wellbeing and mental health for over 30 years. ISMA<sup>UK</sup> practitioners and consultants provide stress management services, including flexible training courses and coaching to individuals and businesses in both the private and public sectors, assisting around 40,000 people who need professional help with stress-related issues every year. To find out more about ISMA<sup>UK</sup>, visit [www.isma.org.uk](https://www.isma.org.uk).

### **Press Interviews**



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