

# **Obesity and the Microbiome Influence**

The gastrointestinal tract is an ecosystem that has a huge impact on human health. Research has shown the floral content of the intestine plays a role in [obesity](#), [allergies](#), [inflammatory bowel disease](#), [cancer](#), and even [psychiatric disorders](#). A new animal study shows how fiber favorably affects the microbiome, and influences metabolism.

Researchers assigned four different diets to mice. The control group was given a standard diet containing 4-6% soy-based fiber. A second group was given a high-fat diet with no fiber. A third group consumed a high-fat diet containing 10% indigestible cellulose fiber. The fourth group was given a high-fat diet containing 10% flaxseed fiber.

Upon examination of the fecal contents, the researchers found that the high-fat group had fewer bacteria associated with improved metabolic health. The group given the cellulose fiber fared a bit better than the high-fat, no fiber group. The group receiving the flaxseed fiber was more physically active and gained less weight than the other groups. The improvement in metabolic health was attributed to species of bacteria that grew to ferment the flaxseed fiber.

The researchers stated, "Our data suggest that flaxseed fiber supplementation affects host metabolism by increasing energy expenditure and reducing obesity as well as by improving glucose tolerance. Future research should be directed to understand relative contribution of the different microbes and delineate underlying mechanisms for how flaxseed fibers affect host metabolism."

The makeup of the bowel flora is important to human health. Healthy flora produce nutrients, support the health of the gut lining, breakdown toxins and keep pathogens in check. Learning how to improve the makeup of the microbiome may go a long way in addressing a variety of health issues.

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