



# Gut health and the workplace: a manager's guide.

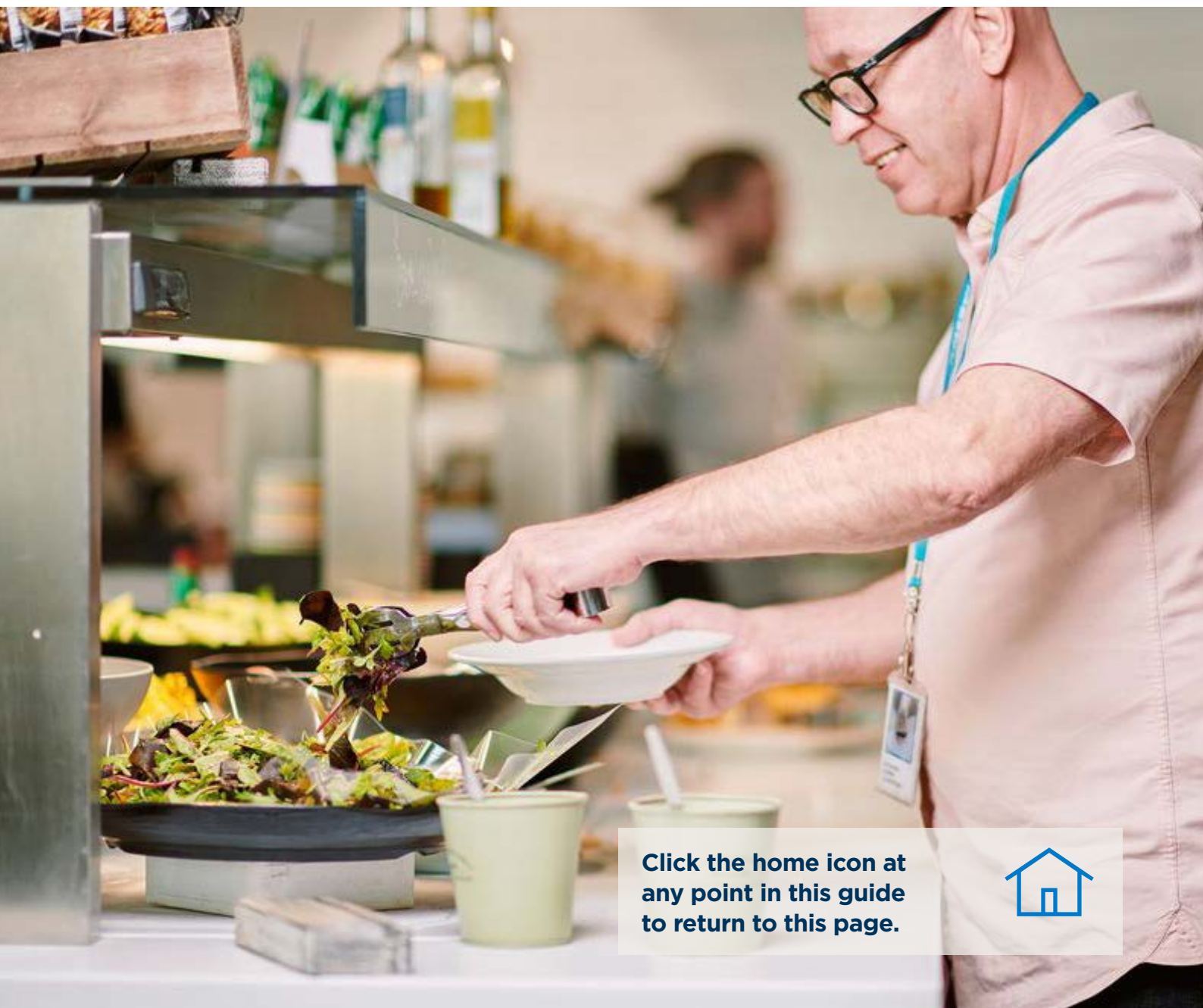
Practical advice, useful tips and  
expert insight to help everyone.

**For your team's wellbeing.**

March 2019.

# Introduction.

Here, we take a look at how gut health could affect your business and how to make the workplace a healthy place for everybody.



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Business success  
and gut health

Gut health affects  
on business

Four workplace  
adjustments



## Can business eat its way to success?

You may have noticed that gut health has become a really hot topic lately. From books to magazine articles, people seem to be paying more and more attention to the role our gastrointestinal system plays in our overall health. Gut health can affect everything from mental wellbeing to your risk of long-term conditions.

One of the best things you can do to look after your gut is to eat well. In the workplace, employers and managers can take steps to encourage and facilitate a healthy diet. It's also important to support colleagues who already have gut health issues, such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis). These conditions are more common than you might think. IBS alone affects up to two in every 10 people, representing a significant number of workers.

**IBS affects  
2 in 10 people**

**This represents a  
significant number  
of workers.**

Managing IBS at work.  
The IBS Network,  
accessed October 2018.







## How could gut health affect business?



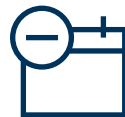
### It can be connected to employee mental health

You may have heard of the 'mind-gut connection'. There are many ways that our mind and gut influence one another. Gut health problems can both cause, and be caused by, changes in mental health.



### It can affect concentration

Gut problems such as bloating, indigestion, constipation and diarrhoea are naturally likely to make it harder to focus at work.



### It causes sickness absence

Research by the IBS Network estimates £3 billion per year is lost through sick days related to gut health\*.



### It may cause embarrassment

Employees may be worried about how to manage their symptoms. This could affect their interactions with colleagues, or how willing they are to participate in certain activities. They might avoid travelling to a meeting, for example, if they're worried about suddenly needing the loo on the way.

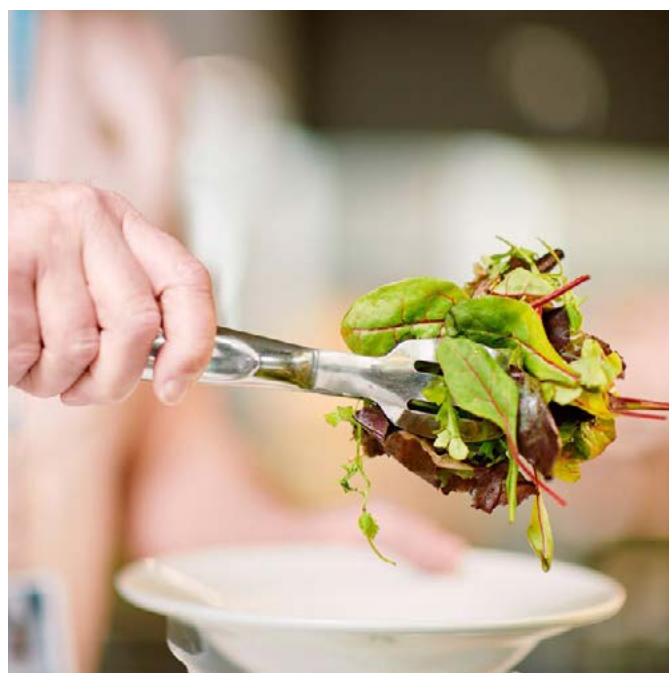
\*Managing IBS at work. The IBS Network, accessed October 2018.

# Four ways to make adjustments in your workplace.

## 1 Promote healthy food and drink

Make sure healthy snacks are available. Encourage colleagues to take their full lunch break, so they have time to eat a nutritious meal. Remember some people might need to avoid certain foods, which could mean leaving the office to find something they can eat; you could help them by providing a fridge so they can bring food from home.

When it comes to work events and parties, go easy on supplying free alcohol and heavy meals, both of which can cause issues for our digestive systems. Provide free fruit to distract people from the cake tray.



**Provide free fruit to distract people from the cake tray.**



**For work events and parties, go easy on free alcohol and heavy meals.**



**Encourage colleagues to take their full lunch break.**



## 2 Encourage open conversations

Talking to your line-manager about a gut health problem can be really difficult. By building a good rapport with your direct reports and signalling to them that you're open to talk about any problems they want to discuss, you can give them the confidence to talk about their needs.

Give them the confidence to talk about their needs



## 3 Offer steps that could help

If a team member does disclose a gut health problem to you, find out what would help them to work more comfortably. It might be working from home sometimes, easier access to toilets, or a workload that takes into account their need to take breaks more regularly than other employees.

Working from home might make working more comfortable



## 4 Know your legal obligations

If your employee has a gut health problem that affects their day-to-day abilities, it may be classed as a disability under the Equality Act 2010. This means your organisation may have a duty to make certain reasonable adjustments to help them work as normally as possible.

A gut health problem that affects your day-to-day abilities may be classed as a disability under the Equality Act 2010



### Find out more

Discover more on healthy eating and various gut conditions  
[bupa.co.uk/health-information](https://www.bupa.co.uk/health-information)

Get information and support for a range of gut health conditions  
[www.gutscharity.org.uk](https://www.gutscharity.org.uk)

Learn more about the link between healthy eating and mental health  
[www.mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk)





# Resources.

## Sources

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2. **Rogers GB, Keating DJ, Young RL et al. From gut dysbiosis to altered brain function and mental illness: mechanisms and pathways.** Molecular Psychiatry 2016.
3. **Managing IBS at work.** The IBS Network. [www.theibsnetwork.org](http://www.theibsnetwork.org), accessed October 2018.
4. **The gut-brain connection.** Harvard Health Publishing. [www.health.harvard.edu](http://www.health.harvard.edu), accessed October 2018.



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