# Experts caution against unproven gut health fads despite kiwi skin benefits



In recent years, there has been a burgeoning interest in gut health, driven by a mix of scientific research and social media influence. Terms like "gut microbiome" and "gut-brain axis" have transitioned from academic circles into everyday conversation, reflecting a heightened awareness among the public. Lorraine Demetriou, a nutritional therapist and scientific advisor at Nutri Advanced, notes the pivotal role that wellness influencers have played in bringing these concepts into the limelight. "Researchers have been studying the gut-brain axis and the microbiome's influence on immunity, mental health, and skin conditions for decades, but social media has catapulted this topic into mainstream consciousness," she observes.

While this increased attention to gut health may seem beneficial, it is not without its pitfalls. Demetriou cautions that the popularity of these trends often leads to the spread of unverified claims, presenting a mixed bag of information. As World Digestive Day 2025 approaches, she outlines several major trends that have gained traction online, urging a critical evaluation of their scientific underpinnings.

One trend that has recently captured the public's imagination is the practice of eating whole cucumbers daily. This rise in popularity has reportedly resulted in significant demand spikes across various regions, particularly noted by the Horticulturists’ Sales Company in Iceland, who reported they could not keep up with consumer interest. While cucumbers contribute beneficial insoluble fibre to the diet, supporting healthy digestion and regularity, Demetriou insists treating them as a panacea for gut health is misguided. "There are no scientific studies that specifically examine the health impacts of consuming an entire cucumber daily," she states, suggesting instead that cucumbers should be part of balanced meals that include proteins and whole grains.

Another trend involves drinking chia seed water, which is often referred to as "tadpole water." This concoction has garnered attention on platforms like TikTok for its supposed digestive benefits. Chia seeds are indeed plentiful in omega-3 fatty acids, protein, and soluble fibre, which contributes positively towards gut health. However, Demetriou warns that the suggestion of chia water as a cure-all is an overstatement. Proper hydration while consuming chia seeds is crucial, as they can absorb a substantial amount of water, potentially leading to digestive blockages. Rather than just mixing chia seeds with water, she suggests incorporating them into a varied diet with more palatable options like porridge or yoghurt.

Similarly, shotting olive oil has gained celebrity endorsement, with prominent figures such as Kourtney Kardashian and Beyoncé claiming it can enhance gut health. Olive oil does contain beneficial compounds that may promote gut flora and reduce inflammation. Nevertheless, the specific practice of taking olive oil shots lacks robust scientific backing. Demetriou points out that while consuming good quality olive oil is beneficial as part of a balanced diet, it is not a miracle solution. Those who struggle with fat digestion should be cautious due to the oil's caloric density.

In another example of trending gut health hacks, the concept of drinking okra water has become popular. The mucilage found in okra is indeed recognised for its soothing properties on the digestive tract. However, Demetriou reemphasises the idea that drinking okra water does not necessarily offer superior benefits compared to consuming the whole vegetable itself. "While incorporating okra into your diet can be beneficial, the convenience of drinking okra water doesn't necessarily provide superior benefits," she clarifies.

Among these trends, one is backed by more substantial evidence than the rest: eating kiwis with the skin on. Research indicates that the skin of kiwis carries significant health benefits, including higher fibre and antioxidant content. Demetriou references a 2018 study showing that consuming the whole kiwi—skin and all—yields more dietary fibre than its peeled counterpart.

Demetriou concludes that while many social media trends may have originated from a place of health consciousness, they often lose their grounding in scientific fact. "The health of your gut doesn’t rest on a single food—it’s about the overall pattern of eating, stress management, sleep, movement, and much more," she asserts. As consumers strive to improve their gut health, it’s crucial to remember that no single food or trend can singularly ensure well-being. Instead, a multifaceted approach that encompasses varied dietary choices and lifestyle practices remains essential for sustainable health.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.womenshealthmag.com/uk/food/healthy-eating/a64901437/gut-health-trends-debunked/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.womenshealthmag.com/uk/food/healthy-eating/a64901437/gut-health-trends-debunked/), [[2]](https://www.tomsguide.com/wellness/fitness/i-drank-cucumber-water-every-day-for-2-weeks-heres-the-results)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.womenshealthmag.com/uk/food/healthy-eating/a64901437/gut-health-trends-debunked/), [[3]](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/chia-seeds-in-water-benefits), [[4]](https://www.webmd.com/diet/health-benefits-cucumber), [[5]](https://www.health.com/chia-seed-water-8691491)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.womenshealthmag.com/uk/food/healthy-eating/a64901437/gut-health-trends-debunked/), [[3]](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/chia-seeds-in-water-benefits), [[6]](https://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/cucumber-health-benefits)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.womenshealthmag.com/uk/food/healthy-eating/a64901437/gut-health-trends-debunked/), [[7]](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/health-benefits-of-cucumber)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.womenshealthmag.com/uk/food/healthy-eating/a64901437/gut-health-trends-debunked/), [[2]](https://www.tomsguide.com/wellness/fitness/i-drank-cucumber-water-every-day-for-2-weeks-heres-the-results), [[4]](https://www.webmd.com/diet/health-benefits-cucumber)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.womenshealthmag.com/uk/food/healthy-eating/a64901437/gut-health-trends-debunked/), [[3]](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/chia-seeds-in-water-benefits)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.womenshealthmag.com/uk/food/healthy-eating/a64901437/gut-health-trends-debunked/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.tomsguide.com/wellness/fitness/i-drank-cucumber-water-every-day-for-2-weeks-heres-the-results> - A fitness writer shares their experience of drinking cucumber water daily for two weeks. They found it refreshing and helpful in increasing water intake, leading to mild improvements in digestion and hydration post-workout. However, no significant skin improvements were observed. The writer plans to continue due to its affordability and potential health benefits.
3. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/chia-seeds-in-water-benefits> - This article discusses the benefits of consuming chia seeds soaked in water. Chia seeds are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, protein, and soluble fibre, which can aid digestion, stabilise blood sugar, and support gut health. However, the article cautions that chia water alone is not a cure-all and should be part of a balanced diet.
4. <https://www.webmd.com/diet/health-benefits-cucumber> - WebMD outlines the health benefits of cucumbers, highlighting their high water content, which aids in hydration. Cucumbers are also rich in antioxidants, particularly in their skin, and contain potassium, which supports nerve and muscle function. They are low in calories and can be a healthy addition to various dishes.
5. <https://www.health.com/chia-seed-water-8691491> - This article explores the potential benefits of chia seed water, including support for weight management, reduced inflammation, and improved blood sugar control. Chia seeds are rich in fibre and omega-3 fatty acids, which may contribute to these effects. The article advises moderation and consultation with a healthcare provider before adding chia seed water to the diet.
6. <https://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/cucumber-health-benefits> - WebMD discusses the health benefits of cucumbers, noting their high water content, which aids in hydration. Cucumbers are also rich in antioxidants, particularly in their skin, and contain potassium, which supports nerve and muscle function. They are low in calories and can be a healthy addition to various dishes.
7. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/health-benefits-of-cucumber> - Healthline highlights the health benefits of cucumbers, including their high water content, which aids in hydration. Cucumbers are also low in calories and may help with weight loss. They contain antioxidants and nutrients like vitamin K, which supports bone health. The article also notes that cucumbers may help lower blood sugar levels.