

**Wicked Problems, Wolfpack Solutions • Future of Food**

# **The Human Gut Microbiome**

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**Published on:** Jan 23, 2023

**URL:** <https://ncsu-wolfpack-solutions.pubpub.org/pub/d7h22t9c>

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**ABSTRACT**

We evolved in a bacterial world. The gut microbiome affects our development, our behaviors and moods, our immune system and overall health, and our ability to break down toxins and harvest energy from the foods that we eat. Microbes affect our health, behavior, and other aspects of our lives and well-being. Decisions we make in our daily lives, from what foods we eat, to how much time we spend outdoors can help us make the most of our gut microbiome, and all the good that it can do for us.

Erin McKenney's research incorporates microbial ecology, nutrition, and comparative gut morphology to investigate novel questions using perfect, unusual systems. For over a decade she has investigated evolutionary adaptation across scales and species, between non-human primates and rogue (herbivorous) carnivores and their gut microbes. More recently, she has engaged the public, particularly students, to study the microbes in sourdough starters and other fermented foods. In the classroom, Dr. McKenney cultivates critical thinking through active learning. She focuses on practicing current techniques to collect and analyze novel datasets. By designing her courses around authentic research experiences, she encourages student autonomy and foster practicing scientists.

Visit the web version of this article to view interactive content.

The Human Gut Microbiome (Erin McKenney)

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**TRANSCRIPT**