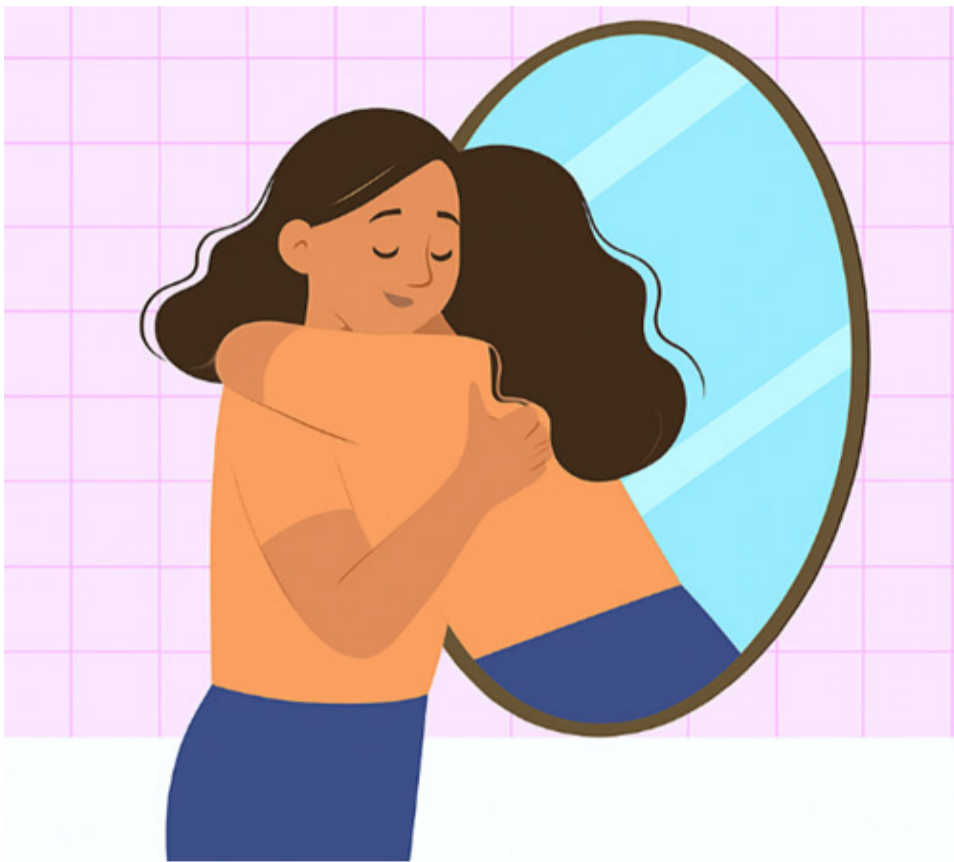


Do our youths feel good in their skin?



Many young people in Singapore quietly struggle with how they feel about their bodies. In our recent nationwide study conducted among 2600 youths aged 15 to 35, we found that **one in five youths experience significant concerns about their body shape.**

The gender divide

These struggles look different for females and males. We found that females face higher rates (25.7%) of body dissatisfaction compared to

males (14.8%). For females, several factors were associated with moderate to marked body shape concerns: younger age, past experiences of childhood trauma, being overweight or obese, and spending more time on social media. For males, their patterns are somewhat different. While social media use and weight concerns were also linked to moderate to marked body shape concerns, educational background was an additional factor, whereas childhood trauma and age were not significant factors as they were for females.

Why this matters?

These findings highlight where support is needed most. Body image is deeply connected to mental health and overall well-being. When young people feel uncomfortable in their own skin, it can ripple into many aspects of their lives.

Where do we go from here?

Through this research, we hope to bring greater attention to body image as a youth mental health priority in Singapore. We want to encourage conversations about building a healthy relationship with our bodies, fostering self-compassion and using social media mindfully. Schools can play a big role by including body image and media literacy in health programs, while public efforts can help promote body diversity and acceptance in our society. By understanding what youths are going through, we can work together to create supportive environments where young people feel valued for who they are, not just how they look.

More details of the study can be found in this publication: Samari E, Vaingankar JA, Tan B, Chang S, Tan YWB, Archana S, Chua YC, Tang C, Lee YP, Chew CSE, Davis C, Verma S and Subramaniam M (2025) Gender-based analysis of body dissatisfaction among youths in Singapore: findings from the National Youth Mental Health Study. *Front. Psychiatry* 16:1505161. doi: 10.3389/fpsy.2025.1505161

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Gut Feelings: A Microbial Clue to Autism?

Exploring the Link Between Gut Bacteria and Autism in Young Adults

What if your gut could tell a story about your brain? A recent study from Singapore found that the tiny organisms in our gut—known as the gut microbiota—might help distinguish young adults with autism from their neurotypical peers.

Using stool samples from 45 young adults with autism and 45 without, researchers uncovered significant differences in the types and amounts of bacteria in their guts. Specifically, people with autism had higher levels of certain bacteria like *Anaerostipes hadrus*, while others such as *Ruminococcaceae* bacterium were more common in those without autism.

Could Gut Bacteria Be a Diagnostic Tool?

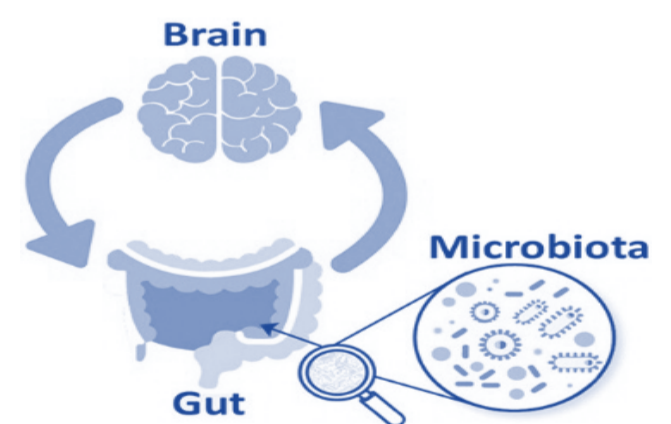
The team then used machine learning to test whether gut bacterial patterns could be used to tell who has autism. Surprisingly, the gut microbiota could potentially predict autism in over 80% of cases, suggesting a promising role as diagnostic biomarkers.

Key Findings:

Distinct gut bacteria profiles were found in those with autism. Some bacteria were linked to behavior and brain function. Gut data could potentially distinguish certain individuals with autism.

Why This Matters:

Early diagnosis of autism is crucial for timely support and intervention. Gut microbiota analysis may potentially offer a non-invasive tool to complement current diagnostic methods.



More details of the study can be found in this publication:

Ying J, Xu X, Zhou R, Chung ACK, Ng SK, Fan X, Subramaniam M, Wong SH. The Gut Microbiota in Young Adults with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder and Its Performance as Diagnostic Biomarkers. *Nutrients*. 2025 May 22; 17(11): 1748. doi: 10.3390/nu17111748. PMID: 40507017

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