

The Microbiome

Biology

The microbial communities on and in the body, and what is established.

The community of microorganisms living in and on a host, most densely in the large intestine, with roles in digestion, immune development and metabolism.

RATIO
~1:1

DENSEST
colon

SPECIES
hundreds

- Bacterial cells roughly equal human cells — about 1:1, not 10:1.
- Most gut microbes cannot be cultured; sequencing revealed them.
- They ferment fibre into short-chain fatty acids.
- They contribute to immune system development.
- Composition varies enormously between individuals.
- Antibiotics disrupt it, sometimes for months.

LOOK FOR IT

Faecal microbiota transplant is an established treatment for recurrent *C. difficile* infection.

Much microbiome research is correlational and in mice. Be cautious with strong causal claims about human health.