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# Why red wine is good for your microbiome

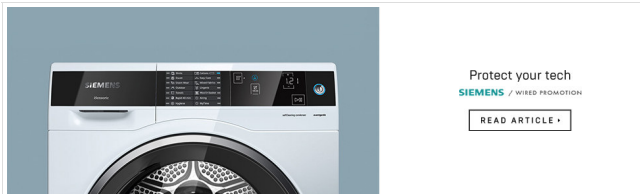
WIRED HEALTH 2016 ([/WIRED-HEALTH-2016](#)) / 29 APRIL 16 / by [EMILY REYNOLDS](#) ([/SEARCH/AUTHOR/EMILY+REYNOLDS](#))

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*From helping humans live longer and hacking our performance, to repairing the body and understanding the brain, WIRED Health (<http://www.wiredevent.co.uk/wired-health-2016>) will hear from the innovators transforming this critical sector. Read all of our WIRED Health coverage here (</wired-health-2016>).*

After experiencing a "major health event" at the top of a mountain, Tim Spector decided to investigate his diet.

Spector, professor of genetic (</genetics>) epidemiology at King's College London, has published more than 800 research articles on the topic and is ranked in the top one per cent of the world's most cited scientists. His current work focuses on the microbiome. He's also chair of the British Gut microbiome project.



Spector sifted through scientific literature, trying to identify which diet factors were good and which weren't. And what did he find? "Lots of dogmas with no evidence to support it," he said.

"Counting calories, avoiding high-fat food, never skipping meals, get five a day. There are so many conflicting dogmas," Spector told the audience at WIRED Health (</wired-health-2016>).

It's clear we have no idea what diet works best, he claimed. Rates of obesity have tripled in every country measured and Spector explained there's "no one diet that fits all".

In a trial comparing a high-fat diet – full of "lashings of olive oil and cheese", according to Spector – and a low-fat diet, made up of low fat dairy and lean meat, the high fat group was actually more healthy.

But despite this, we still think of fat as being bad. "We've become so obsessed with these ingredients that we've forgotten the other organ – our microbiome," he said. "I could tell you more about your health (</health>) from your microbiome than from your DNA."

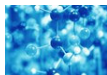
In an experiment, Spector's son ate McDonald's every day for ten days. At the end of the ten days, his "brain and body had really freaked out". He experienced a 40 per cent decrease in biome diversity, and had lost 1,200



Tim Spector *Carsten Windhorst*



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So what can you do to keep your microbes healthy? The answer, Spector said, lies in a diverse diet. The good news? Dark chocolate and red wine can also improve gut microbes.

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"The more diverse the foods you eat, the more diverse your microbes will be and the healthier you're going to be."

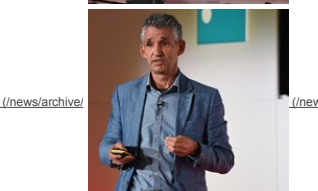
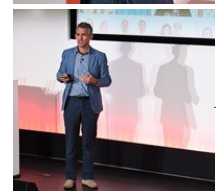
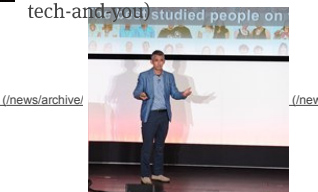
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