

Let's Talk...

LET'S
TALK
GUTS

Conversation starters to help you support a loved one

If you're a family member or friend of someone living with a digestive condition, you might wonder how you can learn more about their condition and the best ways to support them. Everyone is different, and two people living with the same condition might have different experiences, so it's best not to make assumptions. Simply asking your loved one what works best for them can be a great place to start.

Five things to say to show someone you care:

Whether they're newly diagnosed and trying to figure things out, or they've been living with their condition for years, it's important to check in to understand how they're feeling and what might help them. Try these conversation starters today...

1. "You don't have to explain or apologise if you need to cancel plans last minute. What can I do for you instead?"

Why this helps: Guilt and anxiety over letting people down can feel huge to people living with digestive conditions. Validating that their health comes first can help instantly relieve that pressure, and asking if there's anything you can do for them in that moment can help identify what you can do to support them.

2. "I know that your symptoms can flare up unexpectedly. How can we plan our next meet-up so you feel more comfortable?"

Why this helps: It shows you understand that digestive conditions can be unpredictable, and it opens up the conversation to discuss things that might help them. This might be mapping out toilets or choosing gut-friendly venues.



3. "We're having people over for dinner. Is there a specific food or non-food option that works best for you right now, or would you prefer to bring your own?"

Why this helps: Navigating food or conversations around eating at social gatherings can cause huge overwhelm. This question removes the anxiety of feeling "difficult" and ensures they can eat safely or feel comfortable attending a social event that is focused on food.

4. "I'd love to understand a bit more about your digestive condition. Is there a specific Guts UK resource or information page I could read?"

Why this helps: It shifts the pressure of education off their shoulders. Showing initiative to learn about their condition proves you're in their corner and aren't afraid to do what it takes to care. Guts UK provides information on over 40 different digestive conditions and symptoms at gutscharity.org.uk/information.

5. "You've been dealing with a lot lately. I'm here to listen if you want to vent, but we don't have to talk about your health at all if you'd prefer a distraction. What do you need right now?"

Why this helps: Sometimes, people just need to be heard, and other times they want to forget feeling like a patient for an hour. Giving them the freedom to choose the conversation can be incredibly empowering.

When it comes to conversations, a simple 'How are you doing?' can be all it takes to give someone the space to feel seen and heard. Talking can help people to feel less isolated and alone.

If you know someone living with a digestive condition, why not have a natter over the phone, drop them a 'Just checking in' text, or invite them to meet for a walk or a cuppa?



Supporting someone living with a digestive condition?

For information and guidance, go to gutscharity.org.uk/information or contact our Helpline **0300 102 4887** or go to gutscharity.org.uk/helpline. We're here if you need us.

