

# Go with YOUR GUT

Could a gut-healthy diet help with common conditions like endometriosis and PCOS?



**LEA MICHELE**

The actress revealed she has PCOS in 2019.

As the old saying goes, there's nothing wiser than a woman's intuition – or listen to your gut. Whether you agree with that or not, the reality is our microbiome affects us in a number of surprising ways.

Zoe Bingley-Pullin, nutritionist and consultant for Greencare Clinics, says our gut plays an important role in regulating multiple hormones, including oestrogen. While there's a lot we still don't know, this could have repercussions for women with hormonal conditions like endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).

"We're learning more and more about it," she explains. "By not having a healthy diet and not having a healthy microbiome, we can actually see the impact this has on how we produce our hormones."

## WHY IT HAPPENS

You may already know that some of our hormones – including serotonin – are

primarily manufactured by bacteria in our intestines. Our gut doesn't make oestrogen, but it makes the enzyme beta-glucuronidase which plays a key role in the way it is broken down and recycled. When our gut is inflamed or our microbiome is unhealthy, this delicate relationship can throw our oestrogen levels off balance.

"What we end up having is an abundance [of oestrogen]," Bingley-Pullin explains.

Due to conditions like endometriosis and PCOS being more common in women with high amounts of oestrogen, it's possible that a gut-healthy diet could prove beneficial.

However, Bingley-Pullin stresses there are other factors that affect oestrogen, and taming our gut may only be part of the solution.

"Hormones [are] basically like an orchestra where everybody has to have their part," she advises. "This is why we need to make sure we are looking at all the factors, as well as ensuring that we have a very diverse diet with a range of different foods including fruits and vegetables."

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

To allow friendly tummy bugs to thrive, Bingley-Pullin says the first step is to create a happy home by feeding them with plenty of prebiotic foods they enjoy, such as lentils, oats, onions, flaxseeds and green bananas.

Once you've got that sorted, the next step is to boost that friendly bacteria with fermented probiotic foods such as kimchi, sauerkraut and probiotic yoghurt. However, this can be a slow process and Bingley-Pullin says that it's often a good idea to take some supplements when you're starting out.

"That doesn't mean forever," she clarifies. "The best and most successful way, particularly with probiotics, is looking at a six-week to three-month stint."

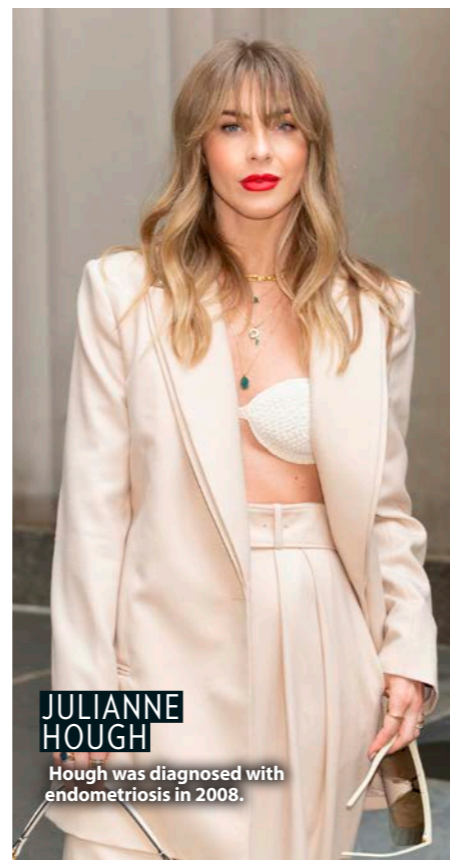
Along with feeding a healthy gut, Bingley-Pullin explains it's important not to forget our liver, which also plays a crucial role in eliminating excess oestrogen.

"We've got to make sure that we're

actually not just breaking it down, and that we're getting rid of this oestrogen," she says. Her favourite liver-boosting foods include rocket, chicory root and witlof.

Lastly, it's good to add a dose of healthy fats, which have been shown to have natural anti-inflammatory properties. If you're buying extra virgin olive oil, stick to Aussie-made brands which are more regulated than some of the overseas options and also tend to be cheaper.

"Hemp oil is another fantastic, beautiful anti-inflammatory [product] to get into the diet," says Bingley-Pullin, who adds that if you don't like the idea of eating this by the spoon, use it in salads and other recipes. "Add it to a smoothie – just pop it in and give it a good shake."

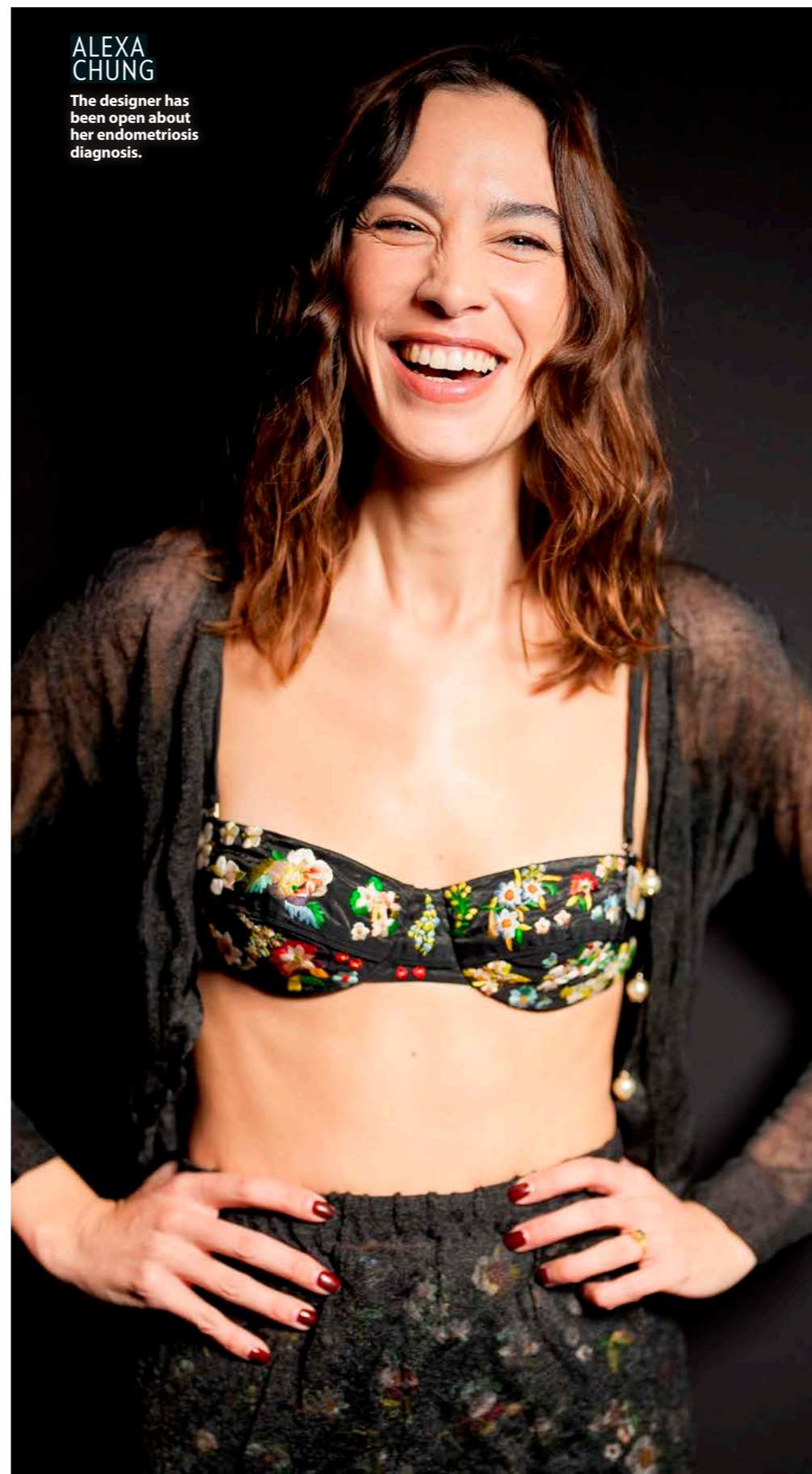


**JULIANNE HOUGH**

Hough was diagnosed with endometriosis in 2008.

**ALEXA CHUNG**

The designer has been open about her endometriosis diagnosis.



TRIED & TESTED

## BILLABONG RETREAT, SYDNEY

If you need a reboot or escape from everyday stresses and strains, a mini getaway at the Billabong Retreat will help jump start your 2024 wellness routine. Body and mind are guaranteed a welcome break during one of their deluxe day retreats, and if you stay for a longer, more immersive break, you'll leave feeling utterly transformed – which is how I felt after two days of yoga, meditation, peace and birdsong staying in one of the new deluxe cabins. Based in Maraylya, just 45 minutes from Sydney's CBD, the idyllic bushland retreat takes its name from the lily pad covered pond it's built around, where guests are guided in restorative yoga and meditation within waterside pavilions. Wellness experts are on hand to help you live life more mindfully and reduce stress. This is paired with a yummy but nutritious veggie-based menu – healthy sweet treats included – meaning your gut health will get a much-needed boost, too.

Visit [billabongretreat.com.au](http://billabongretreat.com.au) for more information.

– Emma Babbington, contributor

