

Put your best fork forward with probiotics & prebiotics

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This year's theme for National Nutrition Month is "Put Your Best Fork Forward," which celebrates the diverse ways to enjoy healthful choices throughout the day. Did you know that one way to improve your health is to focus on your gut? While research continues to explore the area of prebiotics and probiotics, here is some information about what we do know:

What are probiotics?

Although we often associate bacteria as harmful agents that spoil food or make us sick, some bacteria are actually good for our health. The GI tract is responsible for the digestion and absorption of nutrients and is home to trillions of bacteria that are important for keeping us healthy. These "good" bacteria are probiotics and help to maintain balance in the gut, keep the GI tract healthy, and protect against harmful microorganisms.

What are prebiotics?

Prebiotics are a type of non-digestible fiber. Prebiotics pass through the upper GI and once in the colon, probiotic bacteria ferment them for fuel. Think of prebiotics as food for the "good bacteria!"

Where can I find probiotics and prebiotics?

A food first approach is the best approach. Eating probiotics and prebiotics in food gives us the beneficial bacteria as well as with naturally occurring nutrients.

Probiotics: Foods high in probiotics include yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, tempeh, kimchi, miso, pickles, aged cheese, cultured non-dairy yogurts and kombucha. Items containing the words "live active culture" indicate they contain probiotic bacteria. Probiotic bacteria include but are not limited to Bifidobacterium

lactis, Streptococcus thermophilus and Lactobacillus bulgaricus. Probiotic supplements can also be effective if food options are not favorable. However, as with any dietary supplement, it is recommended you consult your physician or registered dietitian.

Prebiotics: Prebiotics are found in a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, including soybeans, asparagus, onions, bananas, artichokes, whole-wheat products, leeks, and garlic.

Did you know?

The number of bacteria in your gut is almost 10 times more than the number of your own body cells!

Want to include more?

Make prebiotics and probiotics work for you at all meals of the day! Foods that combine both together are called synbiotics. Try enjoying a banana with yogurt for breakfast, and stir frying asparagus with tempeh for the evening.

