



Probiotic and Prebiotic Foods

The digestive tract is home to more than 500 species of bacteria, comprising about 100 trillion bugs altogether. Collectively, they are tremendously important for overall health. We give these bugs a home; in exchange, they do a variety of things for us. For instance, they help digest food, synthesize certain vitamins, and play an important role in immune defense. These bugs also act as a barrier to help our bodies filter and appropriately absorb nutrients from what we eat.

There are ‘good’ bugs called probiotics, which we can constantly replenish. These probiotics also need nourishing food to help them grow. Prebiotics are the fiber-rich foods that probiotics feed and grow on. As an added bonus, a compound called butyric acid is produced when the probiotics break down prebiotic foods in the colon. Butyric acid is the preferred form of fuel for the cells that line the colon, and it serves to acidify the environment as well, making it harder for harmful bacteria to survive.

Two of the main probiotic bacteria that reside in the digestive tract are *Lactobacilli* and *Bifidobacteria*. These can be taken in the form of supplements or included in the diet in the form of fermented (or probiotic) foods. The table below lists examples of common probiotic and prebiotic foods.

In order to maintain colonization in the digestive tract, probiotics must be taken or eaten regularly. General recommendations call for ingesting 1 to 25 billion colony-forming units (CFUs) daily. To put these guidelines into perspective, most store-bought probiotic yogurts contain about 1 billion CFUs per serving. To get the maximum benefit from fermented foods, it’s important to read product labels and choose only those that contain “active, live cultures” and preferentially raw, unpasteurized, perishable ingredients. Organic brands are the best choices, as they are not typically heat-treated after fermentation, so more of the good bacteria are present. Fermented foods can also be made at home. Though the probiotic content will vary by batch, home fermenting is a safe way to ensure that you are ingesting beneficial bacteria, as various cultures around the world have done for centuries.

Probiotic Foods	Prebiotic Foods
Acidophilus milk	Asparagus
Buttermilk	Banana
Cheese (aged)	Dandelion greens
Cottage cheese	Eggplant
Fermented meats	Endive
Fermented vegetables	Garlic
Kefir	Honey
Kimchi	Jerusalem artichokes (sunchokes)
Kombucha	Jicama
Miso	Kefir
Natto	Leeks
Pickled vegetables (raw)	Legumes
Sauerkraut	Onions
Sour cream	Peas
Tempeh	Radicchio
Yogurt (plain, no added sugar, active cultures)	Whole grains
	Yogurt

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8 Greatest Probiotic Foods You Should Be Eating

By Dr. Axe

Are you getting enough probiotic-rich foods in your diet? Chances are you're probably not. Probiotics are essential for your digestive health, which most people already know. But did you know there are hundreds of other health benefits of consuming probiotic-rich foods that you might not be aware of?

Probiotic Foods Benefits Are Amazing

Probiotics are good bacteria that primarily line your gut and are responsible for nutrient absorption and supporting your immune system. If you don't have enough probiotics, the side effects can include: digestive disorders, skin issues, candida, autoimmune disease and frequent colds and flus.

Historically, we had plenty of probiotics in our diet from eating fresh foods from good soil and by fermenting our foods to keep them from spoiling. However, today because of refrigeration and dangerous agricultural practices like soaking our foods with chlorine, our food contains little to no probiotics and most foods today actually contain antibiotics which kill off good bacteria.

By adding more probiotic foods into your diet, you could see all of the following health benefits:

- Stronger immune system
- Improved digestion
- Increased energy from production of vitamin B12
- Better breath because probiotics destroy candida
- Healthier skin, improve eczema and psoriasis
- Reduced cold and flu
- Healing from leaky gut and inflammatory bowel
- Weight loss

The Great 8 Probiotic Foods

#1 Kefir – Similar to yogurt, this fermented dairy product is a unique combination of milk and fermented kefir grains. Kefir has been consumed for well over 3000 years and the term kefir was started in Russia and Turkey and means “feeling good”. It has a slightly acidic and tart flavor and contains anywhere from 10 to 34 strains of probiotics. Kefir is similar to yogurt, but because it is fermented with yeast and more bacteria the final product is higher in probiotics. Look for one what is made from whole milk, is lactose free and vat batch pasteurized.

#2 Cultured Vegetables (Sauerkraut, Pickles, and Kimchi) – Made from fermented cabbage and other vegetables, sauerkraut is not diverse in probiotics, but is high in organic acids (what gives food its sour taste) which support the growth of good bacteria. Sauerkraut is extremely popular in Germany today. Kimchi is a cousin to sauerkraut and is the Korean take on cultured veggies. Both of the fermented formulas are also high in enzymes, which can aid digestion. Be sure to look for the refrigerated kind that do not contain vinegar.

#3 Kombucha – (**CAUTION:** Kombucha is made with sugar and yeast and is not suitable for people with Candida overgrowth—First heal the gut!) It is an effervescent fermentation of black tea that is started by using a SCOBY also known as a symbiotic colony of bacteria and yeast. Kombucha has been around for over 2,000 years originating around Japan.

#4 Coconut Kefir – Made by fermenting the juice of young coconuts with kefir grains. This dairy-free option for kefir has some of the same probiotics as traditional dairy kefir but is typically not as high in probiotics. Still, it has several strains that are great for your health. Coconut kefir has a great flavor, and you can add a bit of stevia, water and lime juice to it and make a great-tasting drink.

#5 Natto, Miso and Tempeh – A popular foods in Japan consisting of fermented soybeans. These contains the extremely powerful probiotic bacillus subtilis, which has been proven to bolster your immune system, support cardiovascular health and enhance digestion of vitamin K2

#6 Yogurt – Possibly the most popular probiotic food is live cultured yogurt or greek yogurt made from the milk of cows, goats, or sheep. Yogurt in most cases can rank at the top of probiotic foods if it comes from raw grass-fed animals. The problem is there is a large variation on the quality of yogurts on the market today. It is recommend when buying yogurt to look for 3 things. First, that it comes from goat's or sheep milk, second, that it is grass-fed, and third, that it is organic.

#7 Kvass – This is a common fermented beverage in Eastern Europe since ancient times. It was traditionally made by fermenting rye or barley, but in more recent years has been created using beets, fruit along with other root vegetables.

#8 Raw Cheese – Goat's milk, sheep's milk and A2 cows soft cheeses are particularly high in probiotics, including thermophilus, bifidus, bulgaricus and acidophilus. Always buy raw and unpasteurized cheeses to receive probiotics.