




20 foods to boost your gut health

The latest science suggests that a healthy gut is crucial to your overall wellbeing, and to help it thrive you need to eat probiotics (foods that contain beneficial gut bacteria) and prebiotics (foods that feed those bacteria). Fermented foods such as sauerkraut and kefir are brilliant probiotics, while prebiotic stars include fruit, veg and spices. Registered nutritionist Miguel Toribio-Mateas has the hitlist



1 ALL BRASSICAS
Broccoli, cabbages (all colours and shapes), cauliflower and brussels sprouts are all anti-inflammatory. Eat at least one serving as part of at least one meal of your day, every day.

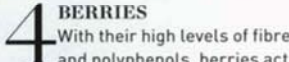


2 LEEKS, ONIONS AND SPRING ONIONS
These share with brassicas a high soluble-fibre content, plus some insoluble fibre (roughage) and a lot of sulphur, which is great for the liver as well as the gut. Red onions are also rich in highly anti-inflammatory molecules called anthocyanidins. Leeks are a great source of insoluble fibre, including a type called inulin, which is intensely prebiotic (meaning it feeds your beneficial gut bacteria). Leeks provide good amounts of a flavonol called quercetin, too, that also acts as a prebiotic. Could be time to make a big vat of leek soup – see deliciousmagazine.co.uk for a recipe.



3 OLIVE OIL
Use this as your staple oil for cooking, ideally cooking at a low temperature and for a short time. Olive oil provides a large amount of beneficial natural substances, some of them well researched as highly therapeutic, as well as anti-inflammatory agents such as hydroxytyrosol and oleocanthal that are known to


neutralise free radicals – unstable molecules associated with a wide spectrum of diseases and seen as contributing factors to ageing.



4 BERRIES
With their high levels of fibre and polyphenols, berries act not only as antioxidants but also as prebiotics, whether fresh or frozen. Frozen berries blend well – add them to smoothies made with milk kefir (a fermented milk drink).

5 TURMERIC
This spice contains a highly protective compound called curcumin – an antioxidant that's also known to be a prebiotic. Use it in cooking or make a salad dressing with olive oil (one part turmeric powder and three parts oil). You can now get fresh turmeric root in some supermarkets.

6 CUMIN
This spice has similar properties to turmeric and is gently carminative (which means it helps your digestion). Add it to turmeric to increase the synergy between the different compounds. Your gut flora love a combination of antioxidant compounds rather than just a single one.



7 GINGER
It contains gingerols, effective anti-microbial agents that are also anti-inflammatory. Add it to

your food however you like – chopped, grated or ground. You can also add it to juices or smoothies, or make a salad dressing following the same instructions as for turmeric (see left).

8 KIMCHI
This spicy fermented cabbage is a great source of fibre and bacteria, but you need to buy the fresh, unpasteurised stuff. Try mrkimchi.co.uk (or make your own as a weekend project – find a recipe at deliciousmagazine.co.uk). You can enjoy it straight or, if you find it too intense, add it to salads or cooked grains such as rice, as they do in the Far East. It's good on konjac noodles (see below) – they're high in glucomannan fibre, which increases your microbial diversity.

9 KONJAC PASTA AND NOODLES
A naturally low-carbohydrate, high-fibre root from the Far East, konjac is now available as noodles, 'rice' or pasta from supermarkets. Newer versions have been enriched with oat fibre to make them more flavoursome, and they're an excellent source of fibre for your microbes. A good one is Slim Pasta Fettuccine (£2.59/200g, Holland & Barrett). One pack per person with a homemade vegetable sauce makes a super-healthy meal. Barenaked spaghetti (£1.99/250g, Ocado) or Barenaked noodles

(£2/250g, Morrisons, Ocado, Sainsbury's, Tesco) are other options.

10 SAUERKRAUT
The classic fermented cabbage is high in fibre and a good source of bacteria. While not as exotic as kimchi, it can be equally effective. Low in calories, it's fantastic as a side or a snack. As with kimchi and other fermented foods, it must be unpasteurised to contain those crucial beneficial bacteria. Try Raw sauerkraut, around £4.50/410g from Ocado and Planet Organic.

11 MILK KEFIR
Swap the milk in your breakfast bowl with 200ml of any flavour of Biotiful Kefir (£2.25/500ml, major retailers*) or eat Biotiful Kefir Protein (£1.35/160g, Ocado or £2.50/400g, Waitrose) for breakfast or as a snack. Kefir contains multiple strains of bacteria and is rich in minerals and the vitamins B and K.

12 GLOBE ARTICHOKE
Enjoy them freshly boiled, tinned in water or from a jar, chargrilled and stored in olive oil, for their prebiotic benefits. To make an artichoke broth, boil chopped fresh artichokes in 1-1.5 litres of water with one or two bay leaves, a few crushed peppercorns and a cube of vegetable stock. Drink the resulting stock as a hot drink or use in cooking. Cool and chill for up to two days or freeze as ice cubes.

13 WATER KEFIR
Although not as nutrient-rich as dairy kefir, this also contains multiple strains of bacteria and has vitamins B and K, as well as beneficial acids and enzymes. It's easy to make at home – see fermentedfoodlab.com/ make-probiotic-rich-water-kefir.

14 UNPASTEURISED CHEESES
Made from untreated raw milk, these are a source of probiotic bacteria and can help with gut health. Manchego, gouda, comté, emmental, gruyère and pecorino are often made with raw milk, but different supermarkets will have various types available. Always read the label and be cautious if you're pregnant or immuno-suppressed.

15 SEEDS
Linwoods Milled Organic Flaxseed, Sunflower & Pumpkin Seeds (around £5.50/425g, Ocado or Holland and Barrett) are delightfully flavoursome, as well as being a good source of probiotic-feeding fibre. Add 1-2 tbsp to your porridge for breakfast or sprinkle over a salad of baby lettuce and chicory leaves.

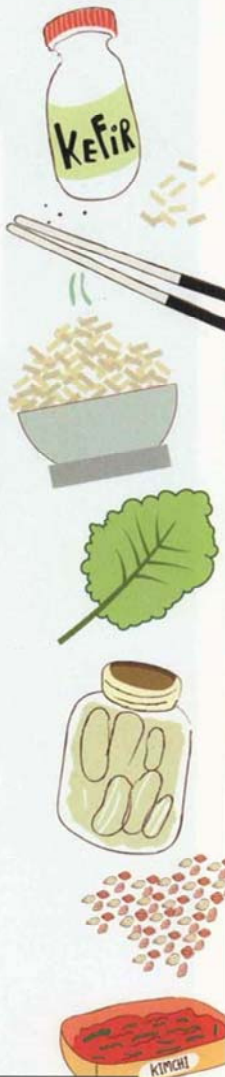
16 BEANS AND LENTILS
A King's College London review of 64 studies found the prebiotic fibre in beans and lentils increased 'good' gut bacteria, specifically bifidobacterium and lactobacillus.

17 KOMBUCHA
This fermented tea from Japan makes a good alternative to alcohol if you want an interesting, non-sweet tittle (it's slightly sour). As with water kefir, it can be bought ready-made, but it's fairly simple and economical to make at home. See happykombucha.co.uk for instructions and find out where to buy the kit you'll need.

18 MISO
The fermented Japanese soy paste is rich with friendly bacteria. Buy unpasteurised Clearspring Organic Hatcho Miso (£5.59/300g) at realfoods.co.uk. Use in salad dressings or, though heating will destroy some or all of its bacteria, as a seasoning in cooking or to make miso soup or stock.

19 SALAD LEAVES
These are a great source of fibre and rich in nutrients. Include a variety – rocket, lamb's lettuce and lollo rosso, for example – and rotate your choices for a range of nutrients to feed the various bacteria in your gut.

20 AND IF YOU HAVE A SWEET TOOTH...
Amazake (£3.99/380g, clearspring.co.uk) is a sweet fermented paste made of millet, rice or sometimes oats. It has the consistency of a runny nut butter and is often used as a pudding topper in Japan. It goes well on an oatcake or rice cake too.



SEE YOUR DOCTOR before taking probiotics if you have a medical condition that means you are immuno-suppressed.

PROBIOTIC SUPPLEMENTS

If you're suffering from IBS, gut experts recommend you eat yogurts that contain added probiotics, such as Activia. If you want to try a supplement, these are some of the best

● **VSL#3** (£14.95 plus P&P/10 days' supply, vsl3.co.uk) These sachets, taken daily, contain 450 billion freeze-dried bacteria in eight strains.

● **Altoforex Precision Biotics** (£24.99/30 capsules, boots.com) Contains a live culture of *Bifidobacterium 35624*, reported to improve bloating.

● **Bio-Kult Advance Formula** (£9.48/30 capsules, bio-kult.com) Has 14 strains, many of which have been shown to help in the relief of IBS.

● **Bimuno IBAID Targeted Digestive Nutrition** (£12/30 pastilles, boots.com) A prebiotic fibre that increases the level of bifidobacteria.