

Great Health Starts with your Gut!

Improve your gut health to help support your general health and fertility- What exactly ARE Prebiotics and Probiotics?

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All health starts with the gut! If nutrients cannot be digested and/or absorbed from our food correctly then this will have an impact on all body organs and systems in some way, including the nervous system, reproductive system and immune system.

It is important to ensure that the gut is full of healthy microbes which are balanced, as these form an ecosystem that works closely together forming many interconnections (this is known as the Microbiome). This finely tuned ecosystem is important for a healthy body and mind as it is involved in the effective absorption of vital nutrients, enhancing the immune system and helping to reduce inflammation in the body, turning off genes, turning on enzymes, helping in the reduction of anxiety and depression and the ageing process (to name a few). A diet high in sugar and fat may negatively affect the gut microbiome and may contribute to certain conditions such as insulin resistance. This can greatly impact fertility (as seen in those with Poly Cystic Ovary Syndrome). Some gut bacteria form vitamin K and short-chain fatty acids such as butyrate, acetate and propionate. These short-chain fatty acids are the main nutrient source of the cells lining the colon. They promote a strong gut barrier that helps keep out harmful substances, viruses, and bacteria which helps reduce inflammation.

How can healthy gut bacteria be improved?

- Consume a good variety of prebiotic foods as these will help to support probiotic bacteria.
- Consume some fermented foods such as sauerkraut or kefir to support gut flora.
- Consume foods containing probiotic bacteria.
- Consider taking a probiotic supplement (check with your GP or Nutritional Therapist/Dietician)

What are prebiotics and probiotics?

Prebiotics are important in our gut as they help the growth of good bacteria (Probiotics). They come mostly from carbohydrate fibres called Oligosaccharides. As

they are not digested, they remain in the digestive tract and encourage good bacteria such as Bifidobacterium and Lactobacillus to grow.

Prebiotics are naturally found in fruit, vegetables and whole grains. Good sources are garlic, onions, leeks, berries, oats, Jerusalem artichoke and bananas.

Probiotics are useful live bacteria such as Bifidobacterium and Lactobacillus which help to maintain the balance in the digestive system and help to keep it healthy.

Probiotic sources are yoghurt containing live bacteria culture, kefir, kombucha, cheese that is not baked, sauerkraut, kimchi, miso and fermented milk. Some foods also have probiotics added to them.

Some of those foods can also be considered synbiotic because they contain both beneficial bacteria and a prebiotic source of fibre for the bacteria to feed on such as sauerkraut and kefir.

Sue is a Nutritional Therapist specialising in fertility, women's health and general wellness. She is the nutritionist for IVF Babble, IVF Babble Africa and Emme Magazine. There are lots of recipes and nutrition articles over on IVF Babble written by Sue in the wellness section- www.ivfbabble.com

Sue is able to offer remote Nutritional Therapy consultations. If you would like more information, do take a look at her website www.suebedfordnutrition.co.uk or send her an email sbnutrition@btinternet.com

Roasted onions recipe – a great source of prebiotics!

Ingredients: (makes 2 portions)

4 small and medium yellow or red onions
1 tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoons unsalted butter, thinly sliced
Pinch of coarse sea salt
Fresh black pepper
Fresh rosemary sprigs

Method:

Preheat the oven to 180 degrees Celsius. Cut the tops off of each onion, but leave most of the skins on the onion. Arrange the onions in a baking dish. Drizzle the olive oil over the onions. Place a thin slice of butter on each onion.

Sprinkle generously with salt and pepper and top with a rosemary sprig.

Bake for 35 minutes or until tender.

Remove from the oven and allow to cool slightly.

Remove the skins, slice and enjoy warm.

Interesting reading.....

Macfarlane S, Macfarlane G, Cummings J (2006). Review article: prebiotics in the gastrointestinal tract. *Aliment Pharmacol Ther.* 24 (5): 701–714

Reid G, Kumar H, Khan AI, Rautava S, Tobin J, Salminen S (2016) The case in favour of probiotics before, during and after pregnancy: insights from the first 1,500 days. *Benef Microbes*;7(3):353-62.

Sanders M (2000). Considerations for use of probiotic bacteria to modulate human health. *The Journal of Nutrition* 130 (2S Suppl): 384S–390S