



... because of its stool-softening effects, soluble fibre makes passing a motion a lot easier.

So, The Wiggles almost got it right. Eat cold spaghetti, mashed banana, but trade your hot potato for cold potato salad. Bam. Prebiotics coming at you.

Prebiotics 101

Prebiotics are defined as selectively fermented ingredients that result in specific changes in the composition and/or activity of your gut microbes, thus conferring health benefits. In a nutshell, prebiotics feed your good gut microbes and, in turn are fermented, resulting in the release of certain gases and beneficial compounds called short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs).

To highlight just a few of their benefits, SCFAs fuel the cells lining your gut, fuel the growth and activity of other good gut microbes, reduce your gut's pH level, which increases the absorption of essential minerals, enhance your gut barrier integrity and immune system, as well as help to regulate the movement of food and waste through your GI tract.

Obviously, prebiotics are integral for good gut health. You can find them in plant foods such as garlic, onion, leeks, cashews, green bananas, wheat, rye, barley, figs, asparagus, beetroot, artichokes and legumes.

No fibre, no fun

Not consuming enough dietary fibre in general can contribute to numerous disorders, including constipation, haemorrhoids, diverticular disease, irritable bowel syndrome, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, overweight and obesity and colon cancer.

And if you don't eat enough prebiotics, this can compromise your gut microbes, which, in turn, has been linked to bloating, abdominal discomfort, diarrhoea, constipation, reduced immunity, overeating, sugar cravings, nutritional inadequacies and even impacts on mood, including anxiety, depression and nervousness.

Eat these six foods daily to get the right mix of fibres

All plant foods contain fibre, so aim to eat a variety of fruits, nuts, seeds, vegetables, wholegrains and legumes every day. And, yes, it really is that simple. For some more defined actions, see below:

- ✔ Include some wholegrains at each main meal, for example rolled oats, quinoa, brown rice, barley, sprouted bread or buckwheat.
- ✔ Include at least two cups of coloured vegetables with lunch and dinner.
- ✔ Snack on a piece of fruit between meals and/or add some into your breakfast muesli, porridge or smoothie. Also vary your fruits often.
- ✔ Eat a handful of nuts each day.
- ✔ Aim to include a few teaspoons of seeds daily. Try adding chia seeds, flaxseeds or LSA to your smoothies, muesli or yoghurt, or pumpkin or sesame seeds to your salads.
- ✔ Include ½-1 cup of legumes (chickpeas, lentils) at least three to four times per week. You can add these to salads, curries, stir-fries, burritos, soups and so on.

Aim to eat a variety of plant foods daily, making sure they contain the three different fibre types:

- ✔ **Soluble fibre:** oats, barley, sweet potato, flaxseeds and the flesh of fruits (passionfruit, avocado) and vegetables.
 - ✔ **Insoluble fibre:** wheat bran, brown rice, wholegrains, brazil nuts, flaxseeds, root vegetables, cabbage, broccoli, peas, green beans and the skins of fruit and vegetables.
 - ✔ **Resistant starch:** barley, sorghum, millet, legumes, unripe bananas, cooked and cooled potato, pasta and rice.
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- ✔ Replace your spreads with hummus, tahini, nut butters or avocado.
 - ✔ Drink lots of water when you're upping your fibre. Aim for at least two litres per day.
 - ✔ And if you don't normally eat much fibre, increase your fibre intake slowly over a number of days to weeks.

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