

PROBIOTIC FOODS

Yogurt

A standby for getting more probiotics is to eat yogurt with live and active cultures. Some yogurts are even advertised to help aid in digestion or promote their probiotic content. According to Harvard Medical School, yogurt usually has *L. acidophilus* bacteria.

Yogurt is a good option because it's easy to find, you can buy any flavor to match your preference and you can eat it right out of the container.

Kimchi

Kimchi is a traditional Korean favorite made by fermenting vegetables with probiotic lactic acid bacteria. Kimchi can give you that probiotic punch, along with healthy foods like vegetables (most commonly napa cabbage, carrots, scallions and radish), garlic, red pepper powder, ginger and other spices. It makes a wonderful side dish and is traditionally served with steamed rice.

Kimchi is associated in research with anti-cancer, anti-obesity, colorectal health, cholesterol reduction, anti-aging, brain health, immune health and skin health properties.

Pickles

You might be surprised to learn that pickles can contain probiotics. You have to make sure to buy fermented pickles, though -- they're usually found in the refrigerated section of the health food aisle. Some brands even advertise probiotic content. They trend under the term "healthy pickles," but be sure to read the labels to ensure they contain probiotics. You can even make them at home. Some people even drink or make use of the juice the pickles are fermented in. Note that jarred pickles tend to be high in sodium.

Sourdough

Sourdough starter has lactic acid bacteria. The starter is the environment where yeast and good bacteria grow by consuming water and flour. Natural prebiotics and probiotics are listed in research as one of the benefits of sourdough bread.

It's also linked to better blood glucose control, reduced cholesterol, a lower risk of diabetes, reduced cardiovascular disease risk and improved weight control. Also, it makes a pretty good sandwich.

Kefir

Kefir is a fermented milk made using kefir grain. It starts as a normal cow's or goat's milk, and then a grain-like yeast and lactic acid bacterial colony called kefir is added to the milk. The mixture is left to ferment for around a day, and then the milk is filtered from the grains, leading to the kefir drink. The resulting drink is a powerful probiotic that packs more probiotics than yogurt.

Kombucha

Kombucha is a health drink that's made its way more into the mainstream in recent years. You can find it in the drink aisle at major grocery stores. This drink is actually a fermented tea, so you're getting the health benefits of tea with the probiotic boost of a fermented beverage. It's made by adding strains of bacteria, yeast and sugar to either black or green tea, which leads to the drink's probiotic-happy atmosphere. It ferments for about a week or more until it grows a mushroom-type texture on top. The mushroom gets filtered out to make new kombucha.

Sauerkraut

This German comfort food is a fermented cabbage made by lacto-fermenting the vegetable in its brine and some salt. As part of the traditional fermentation process, probiotics are in the end product.

But this is another product where you have to buy probiotic sauerkraut or make your own. Many brands use vinegar and sugar or are pasteurized, which reduces the growth of bacteria and kills probiotics. Common canned sauerkraut is usually made with vinegar, or it's pasteurized (or both).

Miso soup

This Japanese comfort food is served as a side to many meals. Miso is a paste typically made from fermented soybeans and works as a condiment to make sauces, spreads and soup stock. Miso soup uses this paste for the stock.

Because miso is another fermented food type, it packs the probiotic punch. Miso soup works great with larger meals or makes a nice, light lunch on its own.

Apple cider vinegar

Apple cider vinegar is twice-fermented apple juice. Apple cider vinegar has been making its rounds for years as a popular health supplement. It has natural probiotics from the fermentation process. Cleveland Clinic states that most studies on apple cider vinegar's benefits are small, but many people also use it for anything from calming acid reflux to weight loss. It has a strong flavor, so if you don't like taking it directly, add it to salad dressing, marinades or pickling.

Some cheese

Certain types of cheeses have probiotics. According to Harvard Health, aged cheeses and not heated afterward tend to have probiotics. Examples include Swiss, Gouda, cheddar, Edam, Gruyere, cottage cheese and provolone. So the good news is that many popular cheese types have probiotics, including a healthy bowl of cottage cheese with some fruit added.

Pickled vegetables

Along the same lines as the kimchi and pickles above, you can also look into any healthy pickled vegetables that list as having probiotics. One idea is to look into lacto-fermented escabeche, a pickled dish from Mexico that can contain all vegetables. Or you can make a fermented Giardiniera, an Italian pickle relish. Using fermented pickled vegetables is also a great way to shop locally and preserve vegetables for use out of season.

Buttermilk

Buttermilk may seem like a drink out of Little House on the Prairie, but traditional buttermilk can be an excellent source of probiotics. Buttermilk covers different types of fermented dairy beverages, but traditional buttermilk is the liquid skimmed out of the butter-making process. The trick is to avoid cultured buttermilk, which is the most common type in supermarkets and usually does not have probiotics.