



TO YOUR HEALTH

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR MICROBIOME

Have you heard of microbiomes? It may sound a bit alarming, but microbiomes are actually microscopic bugs (microbes) living throughout your body—in your eyes, mouth, gut, and skin. No reason for alarm, however, as most microbes are essential and quite helpful because they help you digest food, prevent dangerous infections, and so much more.

This collection of microbes in your body includes bacteria, fungi, and viruses. Together, it's called the human microbiome. Scientists have cataloged the types of microbes that live in the human body. They've found that changes in your body's bugs are linked with many health problems. These include diabetes, obesity, inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD), and cancer. They can also cause skin disorders and tooth decay.

KEEP YOUR MICROBES HEALTHY

Many experts believe that it's not the presence or absence of one particular type of microbe that creates a healthy microbiome, but rather the diversity of microbes. Daily lifestyle habits, especially dietary choices, can help ensure you're maintaining a healthy and diverse microbiome.

Indeed, diet is the major driver that shapes a person's microbiome. Fortunately, your microbes respond quickly



to changes in diet. Take note of these dietary tips for optimal microbiome health:

Eat a variety of whole foods. A diverse microbiome is considered to be a healthy one. A diet that consists of a variety of whole foods, like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, and legumes can lead to a diverse microbiome, which is beneficial for your health.

Have plenty of prebiotics. Prebiotics are types of dietary fiber and they're essential for a healthy digestive system. Prebiotics "feed" the friendly bacteria in your gut, which help your body produce nutrients for your colon cells. Potent prebiotic foods include almonds, asparagus, bananas, whole grains, mushrooms, legumes, garlic, and onions.

Help yourself to probiotics. Probiotics are live, "good" bacteria and yeasts that are good for your overall health, but especially your digestive system. One of the best sources of probiotics is yogurt. It has good bacteria like lactobacillus or bifidobacteria. Look for "live or

active cultures” on the label to ensure the yogurt you choose has them. Other good sources of probiotics include naturally fermented foods such as sauerkraut, pickles, miso, sourdough bread and fermented beverages like kefir and kombucha. Apples, artichokes, blueberries, almonds, and pistachios have also all been shown to increase bifidobacteria in our system.

It’s important to note that some types of foods may harm our microbiome. These include foods high in carbohydrates, rich in sugar, or with too many artificial components.

Protect Your Body’s Microbes

- » Take antibiotics exactly as prescribed. Antibiotics are life-saving medicines. But they can also disrupt the healthy balance of microbes in your body.
- » Eat a diet high in fiber. Fiber is found in plants, including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- » Limit foods that can hurt your gut microbes. These include sugar and fatty or highly processed foods.
- » Wash your hands when preparing food, before eating, and after handling pets or garbage.
- » Use hand sanitizer when you can’t use soap and water. Be sure it contains at least 60% alcohol. But washing with soap and water cleans more effectively.



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.