

24 Foods to Help You Reach Your Ideal Weight & Balance Your Gut

by Dr. Kellyann Petrucci, Naturopathic Doctor

Many people can't seem to lose weight. Instead of offering pills or surgery, focusing on feeding their body the right way is a better approach. A big part of that is treating your gut right: The trillions of microbes that make up your microbiome. When that microbiome is healthy, you have a rock-solid gut. When it's not, you're in trouble.

Why is your human-gut microbiome so important? Because it's the biggest key to having a slim, young, healthy body. Here's why: 80 percent of your immune system is in your gut — and your gut microbes help to modulate this system's activity.

When your microbiome is healthy, your immune system works optimally, and that means you have a lower risk of getting colds, the flu, autoimmune problems, and even cancer. You also digest your food better. That means less gas and bloating and fewer problems with constipation and diarrhea. In addition, it means you get the nutrients your body needs.

An unhealthy microbiome creates inflammation. Eventually, the damage caused by this inflammation leads to a “leaky gut,” allowing toxins and undigested food particles to escape into your bloodstream. This sends your immune system into hyperdrive, causing chronic, low-grade, system-wide inflammation that makes you fat and sick. It's like a forest fire that never goes out. If you heal this inflammation, the pounds will fall off and you will feel younger and more energetic.

Clearly, in order to be your best, you need to treat your gut right — and a big part of that involves prebiotics and probiotics.

1. Trillions and trillions of good microbes live in your GI tract, and they need prebiotics to flourish.

Prebiotics are foods or supplements high in the soluble fiber that your gut microbes love to eat. Here are some of the best prebiotic foods:

Jicama *Onions* *Garlic* *Asparagus* *Leeks*
Bananas *Chicory Root* *Jerusalem Artichokes*

If you don't get enough of these foods in your diet, I recommend taking prebiotic supplements. This is particularly important if you need to take antibiotics, which kill off millions of good microbes along with the bad ones.

2. Your gut also needs beneficial bacteria and other good flora.

One of the best ways to get this is to include probiotic foods in your diet. These foods contain live, beneficial microbes that will settle happily into your ecosystem, helping to build a diverse and well-balanced microbiome. Probiotic foods include:

Sauerkraut *Kimchi* *Pickles* *Coconut Kefir* *(all should be UN-Pasteurized)*

If you aren't used to sauerkraut and kimchi, give them a chance, and I think you'll grow to love them. Sauerkraut is great with eggs or sausage, and kimchi makes a fabulous spicy side dish for any Asian meal.

3. There are other ways to make your gut's microbiome healthy.

When you feed your gut prebiotics and probiotics, you'll lay the foundation for a super-healthy gut microbiome. To make it even healthier, eat anti-inflammatory foods that soothe and heal your gut, making it a better environment for your hardworking microbes. Here are some of the most powerful anti-inflammatory foods:

Bone Broth *Berries* *Coconut* *Turmeric* *Ginger* *Curry Powder*
Fatty Fish *Avocados* *Green & Leafy Vegetables* *Cruciferous Vegetables*
Dark Chocolate *Green Tea*

When you combine the power of prebiotics, probiotics, and anti-inflammatory foods, your microbiome will keep getting stronger and healthier. As a result, you'll lose weight, your hair will get shinier, your skin will look smoother and younger, and you'll feel fantastic.