



15+ Foods to Nourish Your Child's Gut

A healthy diet helps nourish and support every part of your child's body, including their gut microbiota, the trillions of bacteria and microbes in their digestive tract. That's important because the gut microbiota matures during the first few years of life, and early gut health influences many aspects of health later in life.

Cultured and fermented foods contain live beneficial microbes, namely lactic acid bacteria, that, when consumed regularly, may augment the gut microbiota.¹ In addition, certain plant foods are sources of prebiotics. These are indigestible compounds that feed beneficial gut bacteria. Prebiotics can stimulate the growth and activity of probiotic bacteria.

Eating plenty of these gut-nourishing foods can help keep your child's gut bacteria healthy and hard-working day after day.

Kid-Friendly Cultured and Fermented Foods

Yogurt. Greek and Icelandic (skyr) yogurts are lower in sugar and higher in protein than regular yogurt. Buy plain yogurt and sweeten it lightly with mashed fruit or a drizzle of maple syrup.

Kefir. Often described as "sippable yogurt," kefir is fermented milk with a flavor like yogurt. However, it provides a greater variety of bacteria strains than yogurt. Look for brands with no added sugar. Pour kefir over oatmeal, use it in a smoothie, blend it with fruit and make ice pops, or make homemade creamy dressing for salads or vegetables.

Kefir water or coconut kefir. These are good dairy-free options that still provide the probiotic benefits of kefir. They are lightly sweet and sour with a bit of fizziness. Add these to juice or a smoothie.

Fermented pickles (or other vegetables). Look for these in the refrigerator section and check the label to ensure they contain live bacteria and no vinegar. Vinegar kills off the beneficial bacteria. Instead, fermented vegetables get their pickled flavor from lactic acid.

Tempeh. This protein-rich food is made with fermented soybeans pressed into a patty. With a nutty, earthy, mushroom-like flavor, tempeh is easy to use in stir-fry meals instead of meat.

Miso. A salty, fermented soybean paste, miso is a tasty seasoning for soups, stews, or vegetables.

Certain types of cheese. Cheese is made by fermenting milk, but not all cheese retains beneficial bacteria during the cheese-making process. Aged cheeses like cheddar, provolone, and Swiss are often good choices.² Some brands of cottage cheese also contain probiotics.

Prebiotic-Rich Foods for Children

Jicama. Cut this versatile vegetable into strips and serve it with other raw vegetables. Jicama is also tasty on tacos or tossed into salads.

Asparagus and onions. Sauté these and add them to scrambled eggs or an omelet. Serve steamed and chilled asparagus with a homemade vegetable dip made with probiotic-rich cottage cheese blended with fresh herbs and lemon zest.

Bananas and blueberries. Combine these with yogurt or kefir and a handful of greens to make a gut-nourishing smoothie.

Oats. Cooked or overnight oats topped with fruit and nuts is a satisfying breakfast. Also, try making homemade granola or grind oats in a food processor and use the oat flour to make pancakes.

Flax seeds. Add ground flaxseed meal to a smoothie or when making muffins or other baked goods, pancakes, waffles, or energy bites.

Cocoa powder. Unsweetened cocoa powder has compounds called polyphenols, which have prebiotic properties.³ Add a small spoonful of cocoa powder to oatmeal, a smoothie, or pudding, or incorporate it into energy bites for a burst of chocolate flavor.

Tips & Probiotic and Prebiotic-Rich Recipes

- Whenever possible, choose organic, grass-fed dairy products.
- When buying cultured and fermented foods, read the label and look for “live bacteria” or “active cultures.”
- Note that probiotics are different than fermented and cultured foods. Probiotics (from supplements or added to foods) are species and strains of bacteria with proven health benefits when consumed in recommended amounts.
- To ensure your child gets a consistent amount of probiotics each day, consider using a [probiotic supplement designed for children](#) or [probiotic powder for infants and children](#).
- You can also add [probiotic powders](#) to food and beverages that don’t require cooking. Note that heat destroys the live cultures.

Try these easy recipes to help make probiotics and prebiotics a part of your child's daily routine.

Frosty Blueberry Banana Smoothie (makes about 10 ounces)

- ½ frozen banana (slightly thawed)
- ½ cup frozen blueberries (slightly thawed)
- 1 handful of baby spinach
- 6 ounces unsweetened kefir
- Optional: ¼ teaspoon [Ther-Biotic® Complete Powder](#)

Combine the ingredients in a blender jar and blend until smooth. Add more kefir or water for a thinner consistency.

Chewy Chocolate Energy Bites (makes about 21 pieces)

- 1 cup old-fashioned oats
- ¼ cup ground flax meal
- 3 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 ½ cups pitted dates
- ¼ cup almond butter
- 2-3 tablespoons water
- Optional: 4 teaspoons [Ther-Biotic® Complete Powder](#)

Combine the oats, flax meal, and cocoa powder in a food processor and process until the oats are broken down and the mixture is combined.

Add the vanilla and then the dates in two batches, pulsing until smooth and a dough forms.

If the dough is too dry, add water, one tablespoon at a time. If it's too loose, add an extra tablespoon of flax meal. Note that the flax will absorb liquid over time.

Roll the dough into 21 one-inch balls. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Please note: Making a full recipe and incorporating [Ther-Biotic® Complete Powder](#) will make each bite come in a little under ¼ tsp. of the powder per bite (daily suggested serving). Please always discuss with your child's healthcare provider before starting a new routine.

REFERENCES:

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