

## WELLNESS WEDNESDAY

### Probiotics, Prebiotics, and... Postbiotics?

**Probiotics** are beneficial microorganisms (yes, bacteria!) that reside in our digestive tracts. It's pretty clear, from a mountain of scientific evidence, that maintaining gut health is crucial for overall physical health, affecting things as diverse as digestion, systemic inflammation, and immune function. While supplemental probiotics are an extremely popular way to add to the internal population, the most effective way to increase the health-promoting varieties of bacteria in our guts is actually to feed what's already there. Enter prebiotics...

**Prebiotics** are specific plant fibers that promote the growth and maintenance of probiotics. These types of carbohydrates are nearly indigestible for us, but act like food for probiotic microorganisms. When contemplating diet plans to achieve certain health goals, it may also be interesting to see if there are ample foods that will support digestive health in this way. Ideally we'd be eating foods with prebiotic fibers like apples, bananas, barley, berries, garlic, greens, legumes, oats, onions, tomatoes, and wheat.

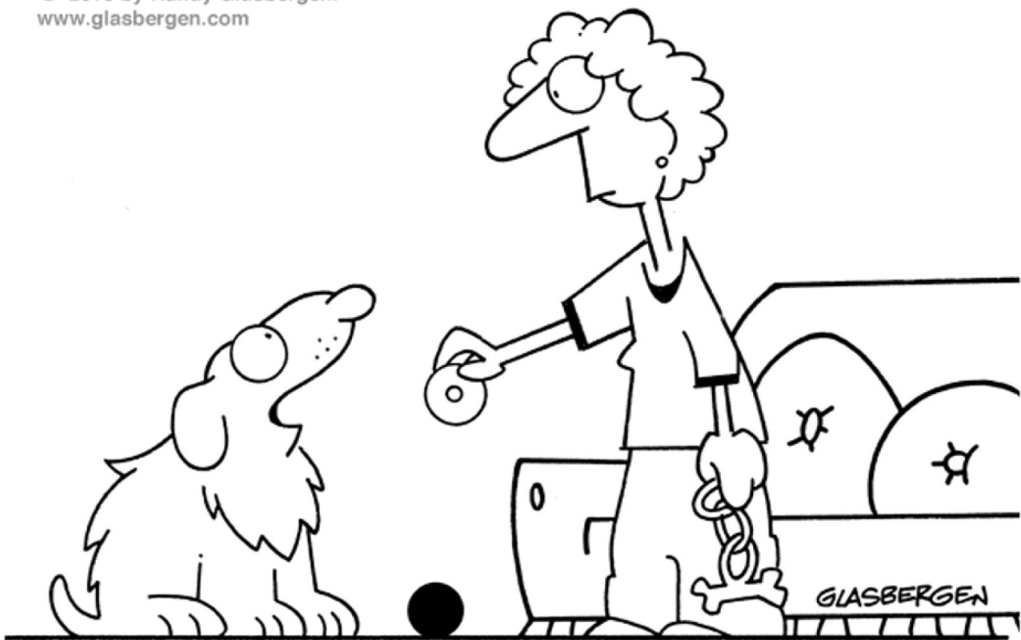
**Postbiotics** are getting more attention recently, in addition to the usual pre and probiotics. However, it's not a new supplement we'll have to add to our routine—thankfully! Postbiotics are essentially bioactive compounds left behind after prebiotics been broken down through fermentation by probiotics. This includes some vitamins, amino acids, short-chain fatty acids, and antimicrobial peptides that slow the growth of harmful bacteria.

Postbiotics are believed to help manage inflammatory responses, promote digestive motility, boost metabolism, and improve immune function. It's important to note that the foods that promote probiotic proliferation and their postbiotic byproducts are the very same ones that reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers. You know, vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds! What this means is that if we're already supporting our overall health with sound nutrition practices, postbiotics are just one of the many natural and beneficial outcomes!

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/nutrition/what-are-postbiotics>

Not all bacteria is beneficial, though, so regular hand-washing is still a good habit!

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**“I notice you always wash your hands after we play.  
Frankly, I find that offensive.”**

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