

# The naturopathic advisor



**Natural Lifestyle has teamed up with experts at CNM (College of Naturopathic Medicine) to answer some of your burning health questions. This issue, you asked:**



## Q What is our 'microbiome', and 'good' and 'bad' bacteria?

Our 'microbiome' refers to the trillions of types of bacterial cells that live in our bodies. Our personal microbiome is totally unique, depending on our genetics, habits and environment and the interplay between these. Our microbiome is intricately linked to our health and immunity in both positive and negative ways.

Different bacterial colonies are being linked with a host of diseases and disorders, from cancer, to cardiovascular disease, allergies,

depression, obesity and more.

'Good' bacteria or 'probiotics' are defined as live microorganisms which can provide benefits to human health. 'Bad' bacteria are those which are not good for our health and wellness. Keeping up high levels of the good bacteria is desirable so that the bad ones can't take hold.

'Prebiotics' are foods which nourish our probiotics. They are components of foods that are indigestible to us, but the bacteria in our gut thrive on them. 'Good' bacteria seem to flourish more than the 'bad' with the introduction of prebiotics.

## LOOKING AFTER YOUR MICROBIOME

For a more positive bacterial profile:

- Use eco-friendly products and

natural cleaners, such as vinegar and baking soda, rather than harsh disinfectants.

- Don't eat artificial sweeteners – they are toxic to gut bacteria.
- Only take antibiotics when absolutely necessary – both good and bad bacteria are affected by antibiotics.
- Add 'live' or 'living' fermented foods to your diet, look for those key words.
- Make your own fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kombucha and kefir.
- Eat prebiotics, such as garlic, asparagus, onions, leeks, bananas, artichokes, blackberries, and seaweed.
- Red meat and saturated fat alter the microbiome unfavourably, choose vegetable proteins instead, such as legumes, nuts and seeds.
- Where possible, choose organic

food to minimise disruptive chemicals such as pesticides, which can damage our internal flora.

- Don't binge drink – excessive alcohol is poison to the gut.
- If using a probiotic, look for products with billions of colony forming units. With the frequent exception of *Saccharomyces boulardii*, probiotics are named by their genus, species and strain, for example, *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* GG. There are vast differences between the effectiveness and properties of different strains, so enlist the help of a naturopath for support and advice.



### YOUR EXPERT

Your question has been answered by Naturopath, Gemma Hurditch, for CNM. For information on CNM training in a range of natural health therapies, visit [www.naturopathy-uk.com](http://www.naturopathy-uk.com)

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