



## Buzz, Body & Bites

A newsletter for actively aging adults  
Virginia Cooperative Extension Family & Consumer Sciences  
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### How Your Diet Can Support Your Intestinal Health

Diet and nutrition influence many aspects of our health, and our gastrointestinal (GI) tract is no exception! It has been clear for many years that what we choose to eat in our diet can impact conditions commonly associated with GI health including promoting regular bowel movements and decreasing unpleasant bloating or gas. More recent research suggests our diet is one of the important factors that influences the gut microbiome, which refers to the types and proportions of bacteria found in our GI tract. The gut microbiome can influence many health conditions beyond GI health including immunity, mental health, and risk for other chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer. Although there has been a lot of interest and ‘hype’ surrounding the ability of probiotic supplements to impact the gut microbiome, the jury is still out on the exact types and quantities of these products that could be best for our health. However, we know a diet rich in sources of fiber is one of the best ways to support the microbiome, in addition to many other health benefits.

### What is Dietary Fiber?

Dietary Fiber is a portion of plants that cannot be broken down or digested. Insoluble fiber controlling cholesterol and blood sugar levels. You can find dietary fiber in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, and seeds. A diet rich in fiber can help support intestinal health, in addition to promoting a healthy body weight and reducing risk for heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

### How Can You Increase Fiber in Your Diet?

The best (and tastiest!) way to increase fiber in your diet is by increasing the variety of plants you consume. Here are a few tips:

- add your favorite fruit to a bowl of yogurt or cottage cheese
- dip vegetables in your favorite dressing or hummus
- grab a handful of nuts for a snack
- choose bread, pastas, and cereals made from whole grains (indicated on the label)
- have a bowl of lentil soup with a meal, or top a salad with chickpeas

Increase fiber in your diet slowly (one additional fiber food per meal), and make sure to increase your fluids and keep physically active!

Make sure to talk with a medical professional if you are experiencing any changes in your GI health, and consider meeting with a Registered Dietitian to talk about ways to adjust your diet to maximize your health!

Contributed by: Lauren Fay, RD, CSO, CNSC; Oncology Dietitian Clinical Specialist Life with Cancer, Inova Schar Cancer Institute.

# Foods for a Healthy Microbiome

A healthy gut starts with a healthy microbiome. Probiotics are live microorganisms that, when consumed in adequate amounts, confer a health benefit. Regularly eating foods that contain health-promoting bacteria can help maintain a healthy microbiome. Here is a list of foods that contain probiotics and other live cultures to add regularly to your diet.

Fermented foods with probiotics and live cultures:

- Yogurt - a source of probiotics, choose those with “active or live cultures on the label.”
- Some types of cheeses - some cheeses contain live cultures including gouda, mozzarella, cheddar, Swiss, and parmesan.
- Some brands of cottage cheese - look for “live or active cultures” on the food label.
- Sauerkraut that has not been pasteurized - look for “live or active cultures” on the food label.
- Kimchi - a fermented spicy Korean dish made with cabbage and other vegetables. Available in some grocery stores.
- Fermented soy products such as tempeh and miso.

## Kale, Chickpea, & Barley Soup

This delicious soup has folate-rich kale, and high-fiber beans and barley – all ingredients for a healthy intestinal tract. Cumin, oregano, and garlic give it a rich, hardy flavor. Source: <https://eatSMARTmoveva.org/recipes/kalechickpea-barley-soup/>

### Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons cumin
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 4 carrots, sliced
- 2 tomatoes, diced
- 8 cups water
- 14 ounces canned low-sodium chick peas, drained and rinsed
- 1/3 cup barley
- 6 low-sodium chicken bouillon cubes
- 2 cups kale, torn

### Instructions:

1. Toast cumin in a pot over medium heat 1 minute, stirring. Add olive oil.
2. Add onion, garlic, oregano, and black pepper. Cook until the onion and garlic become translucent, about 2-3 minutes.
3. Add carrots and tomatoes and cook until they begin to soften, about 5 minutes.
4. Add water, chickpeas, barley, and bouillon cubes. Bring to a boil, then reduce to simmer. Let simmer 20-25 minutes until barley is tender.
5. Add kale during the last 5-10 minutes of cooking. Serve hot.

## Stretch Band Exercises

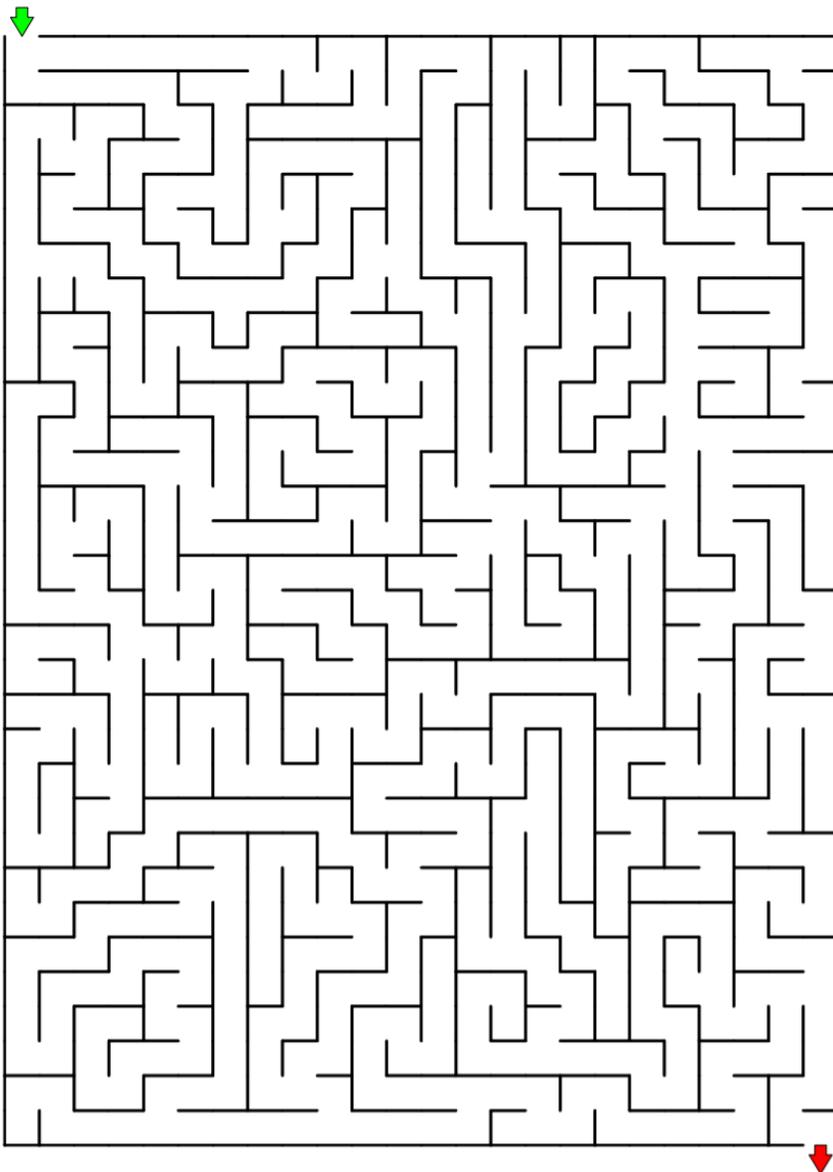
Resistance bands are a great way to strengthen muscles all over! Try this exercise to strengthen your shoulder and upper back muscles.

1. Stand or sit up straight with your arms extended in front of you, shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold the stretch band in both hands with palms facing forward with a slight bend in the elbows.
3. With arms extended, open your arms, stretching the band across your chest squeeze slowly shoulder blades together to desired tension.
4. Slowly bring arms back to the start position and repeat 10 - 15 times.

## Solve the Maze

Our intestine is like a maze! Start at the green arrow, and make your way to the exit at the red arrow.

Source: [krazydad.com/puzzles](http://krazydad.com/puzzles)



# Resources

University of California, Berkeley - Resistance Band and Body Weight Exercises  
<https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/wellnessresistancebandexercises.pdf>

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Eat Right [www.eatright.org/food/vitamins-and-supplements/nutrient-rich-foods/prebiotics-and-probiotics-creating-a-healthier-you](http://www.eatright.org/food/vitamins-and-supplements/nutrient-rich-foods/prebiotics-and-probiotics-creating-a-healthier-you)

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