

Health & Wellness

September
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Issue 12

Gut Health

This month's Health & Wellness topic is **Gut Health**. For this issue, we're going to go over the different variables that contribute to a healthy gut such as probiotics, prebiotics, fiber, Omega-3s, and more.



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Welcome to DuPage Senior Citizens Council/Kane Senior Council's September Health & Wellness Newsletter!

We're here to bring you a new topic relating to wellness as well as new brain teasers, seasonal recipes, book recommendations, and more!

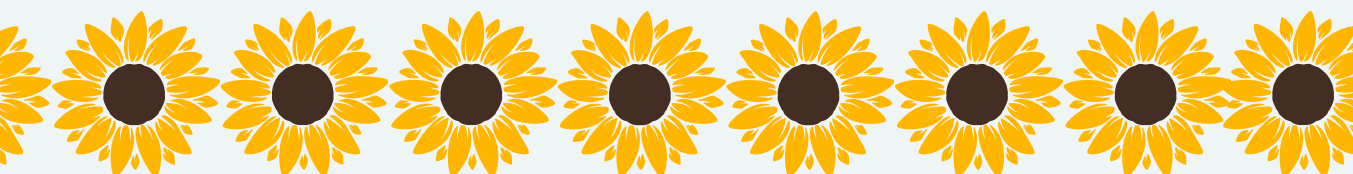
Providing Meals and More...



DuPage Senior
Citizens Council



Kane Senior
Council



Gut Health

Introduction

Tummy troubles affect all of us and can come at the worst time.

Knowing what can keep our gut healthy and what can trigger problems can help decrease the flareups.



Nourishing the **healthy bacteria** in your **digestive tract** with a mix of **probiotics** and **prebiotics** is the key to avoiding discomfort.

Information adapted from:

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/feed-your-gut>

What are Probiotics?

Probiotics are living **microorganisms** found in foods such as yogurt and fermented vegetables.

Probiotics add to your gut **microbiota** - the collection of 100 trillion or so **bacteria** and other critters living in your gut.

Having a healthy microbiota can help foster a **healthy immune system** and reduce damaging inflammation in the body.

Eating probiotics regularly can also help to prevent the **intestinal environment** from being overrun by **unhealthy bacteria**, which have been linked to everything from mood disorders and obesity to diabetes and neurodegenerative diseases.

Probiotics

Probiotics found in **fermented** foods and drinks (yogurts, cheese, kefir, kimchi, and sauerkraut) can add **desirable organisms** to your gut.

But **not all** varieties of these foods have probiotics; it depends on how they are **processed**.

Sometimes foods that **naturally** contain probiotics are then **cooked** or heated, killing the microorganisms and any potential health benefits along with them.

The occasional food with probiotics added into your diet won't do much to help you improve your microbiota; eating probiotics needs to be a **regular occurrence**.

Try adding them into **at least one meal daily** for the biggest benefit.

Prebiotics

Prebiotics are types of food, such as fiber, the body doesn't digest but can be used as "food" for microorganisms in the intestines.

Even if you eat a lot of foods that contain probiotics, it won't do you much good if your **intestinal environment** doesn't allow them to grow.



Research has shown that a **traditional Western diet** (heavy on fat, sugar, and animal meat) creates a **toxic environment** for **healthy microbes** and can even change the proportion of different types of bacteria inside your body.



Beneficial bacteria love fiber. When fiber enters your digestive system, enzymes from the microbiota help to break it down, producing substances called **short-chain fatty acids**.



Experts think that having more of these fatty acids changes the pH inside your colon, making it **less hospitable** to some damaging types of microorganisms.



Prebiotics (cont.)

Some good **prebiotic** options are **beans** and **whole grains** (oats and wheat).

Vegetables and **fruits** also contain healthy **fiber**.

Other good prebiotic sources include **garlic**, **bananas**, **onions**, **asparagus**, and **seaweed**.

The goal should be to make sure your diet contains a **good balance** of **probiotics** and **prebiotics**.

If you feed your gut well, you will benefit from better health.

Fiber

Fiber is crucial for gut health because it acts as a **food source** for **beneficial bacteria** in the digestive system, helping to maintain a healthy and balanced gut **microbiome**.

This, in turn, can lead to improved digestion, reduced inflammation, and a lower risk of various diseases.

Fueling the Gut Microbiota:

- Fiber, particularly prebiotic fiber, is **not digested** by the body, but it is **fermented** by **gut bacteria**.
- This **fermentation process** produces **short-chain fatty acids** which are beneficial for gut health and overall well-being
- These fatty acids nourish the cells lining the **colon**, reduce **inflammation**, and improve **gut barrier function**.
- A **diverse** and **balanced** gut microbiome, fueled by fiber, can help protect against **harmful bacteria** and **pathogens**.

Improving Digestive Health

- Fiber adds **bulk** to the stool and helps regulate bowel movements, preventing constipation and promoting **regularity**.
- **Insoluble fiber** helps move food through the digestive tract, while **soluble fiber** can help soften stools.
- A **high-fiber diet** can also reduce the risk of hemorrhoids and diverticulitis.

Reducing Disease Risk

- A high-fiber diet is associated with a **reduced risk** of several chronic diseases, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers
- By promoting a healthy gut microbiome, fiber can help regulate **blood sugar levels**, improve **cholesterol levels**, and reduce **inflammation**

Types of Fiber and Sources:

Soluble

Fiber

Dissolves in water and can be found in foods like oats, beans, lentils, and fruits.

Insoluble

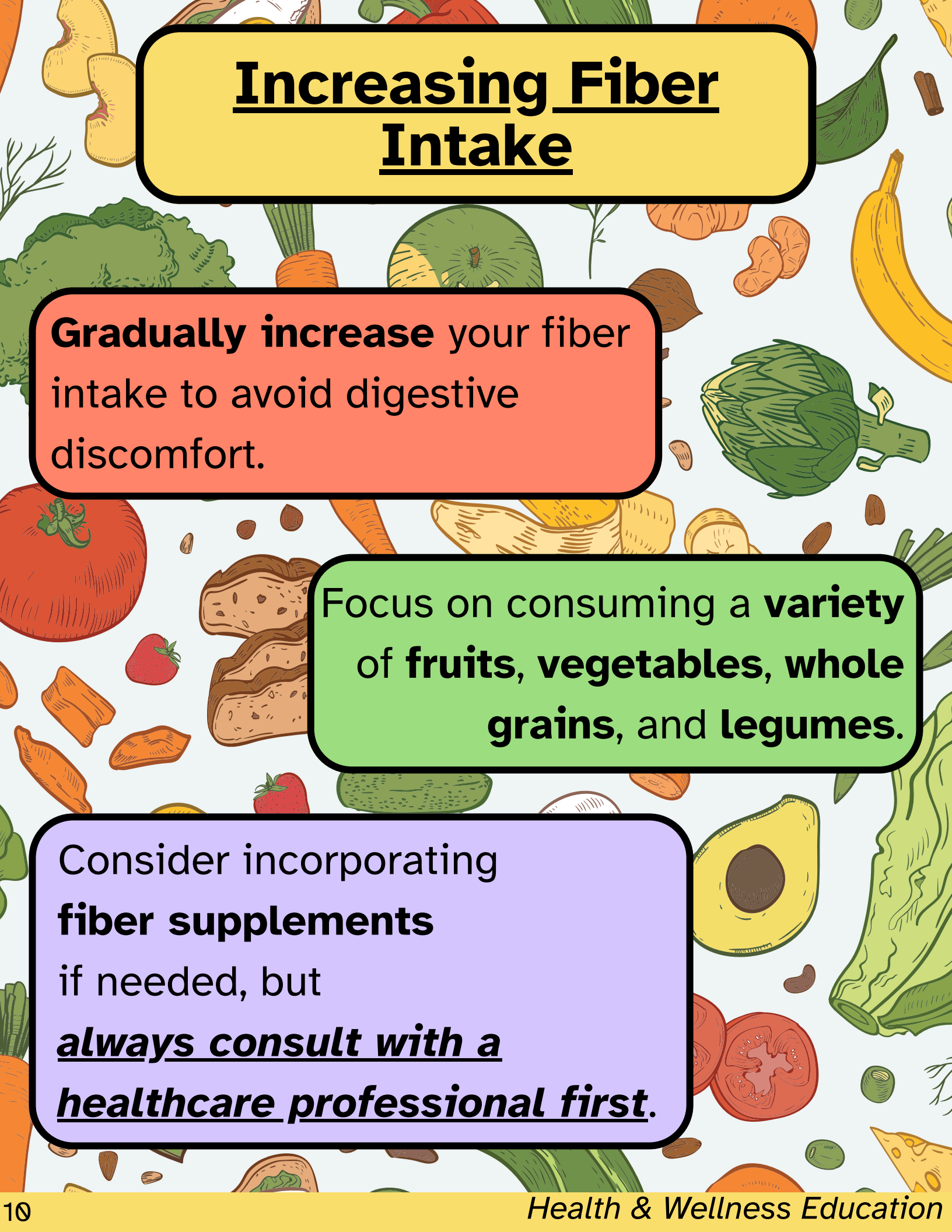
Fiber

Does not dissolve in water and can be found in foods like whole grains, vegetables, and nuts.

Fermentable

Fiber

A type of **soluble fiber** that is readily **fermented** by **gut bacteria**.



Increasing Fiber Intake

Gradually increase your fiber intake to avoid digestive discomfort.

Focus on consuming a **variety** of **fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes.**

Consider incorporating **fiber supplements** if needed, but **always consult with a healthcare professional first.**

Polyphenols



Polyphenols,
found in many

plant-based foods, can
significantly impact gut
health by influencing the
compositions and
function of the gut
microbiome.

They can **promote** the
growth of **beneficial
bacteria** while also
inhibiting the growth of
harmful bacteria,
ultimately contributing to a
healthier gut environment.



Prebiotic Effects: Polyphenols act as
prebiotics, meaning they **nourish beneficial
gut bacteria,** helping them thrive and
outcompete harmful species.

Polyphenols can alter the **balance** of **bacteria**
in the gut which has been associated with
various health benefits.

Gut bacteria **metabolize** polyphenols, producing **short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs)** like butyrate, which are crucial for gut health and overall well-being.

Polyphenols can contribute to a healthier **gut lining**, potentially reducing **inflammation** and improving the overall **integrity** of the **intestinal barrier**.

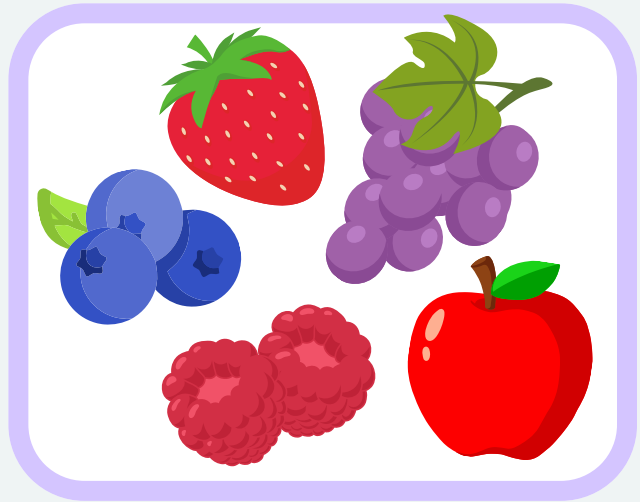
Polyphenols may play a role in **preventing** or **mitigating** the effects of **various diseases** including **cardiovascular disease, obesity,** and **neurodegenerative diseases**.

The effects of polyphenols on the gut microbiome can vary between individuals, depending on factors like **diet, lifestyle, and genetics**.

Examples of Polyphenol-Rich Foods for Gut Health

• Fruits

- Berries
 - Strawberries
 - Blueberries
 - Raspberries
- Apples
- Grapes



• Vegetables

- Spinach
- Celery
- Olives
- Asparagus
- Broccoli



• Other

- Dark Chocolate
- Green Tea
- Pomegranate Juice



*The **amount** of polyphenols that are **actually absorbed** and **utilized** by the body can also vary*

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Omega-3 fatty acids can **positively influence** gut health through various mechanisms, including:

- **Modulating** the **composition** and **function** of gut microbiota
- Enhancing the **intestinal barrier**
- Reducing **inflammation**

**Strengthen
the gut's
protective
lining**

**Promote the
production of
beneficial
short-chain
fatty acids**

**Impact the
balance of
beneficial and
harmful
bacteria**

Omega-3s can...

- **influence** the **types** and **amounts** of bacteria in the gut, potentially increasing the **abundance** of **beneficial bacteria** while **reducing** the presence of some **harmful bacteria**
- promote the **production** of short **chain fatty acids**, which are important for **gut health** and have **anti-inflammatory properties**.
- help **maintain** the **integrity** of the **intestinal lining**, which acts as a **protective barrier** against harmful substances entering the **bloodstream**.

Omega-3s have **anti-inflammatory properties** and can help **reduce inflammation** in the gut, which is often associated with **various digestive issues**

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

Omega-3s may help improve IBD symptoms by promoting a healthier gut **microbiota composition** and **reducing inflammation**, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Obesity

An **imbalance** in **omega-3** and **omega-6** intake can contribute to obesity. Omega-3s can help **restore balance** and potentially **mitigate** some of the **negative effects** of a **high-fat diet**, according to the National Institute of Health (NIH)

Health & Wellness Education

WRAP UP

Gut Health and Nutrition are closely linked.

A **balanced diet** rich in fiber, prebiotics, and probiotics can promote a healthy gut...

...which in turn supports **overall health and well-being.**

For more health and wellness tips, information and resources, visit our website.



September Recipe: White Tea with Berries

Recipe from: APlaceforMom.com

Ingredients:

- 2 bags white tea
- Cold water
- 1 cup mixed berries, such as blueberries and strawberries



Directions:

1. Wash berries thoroughly.
2. Quarter strawberries, leaving other berries whole.
3. Add tea bags and cover with water.
4. Infuse in the fridge for several hours, or until tea has brewed.

Our Book Pick of the Month

Tom Lake by Ann Patchett

“In the spring of 2020, Lara’s three daughters return to the family’s orchard in Northern Michigan. They beg their mother to tell them the story of a famous actor with whom she shared both a stage and a romance years before at a theater company called Tom Lake. As Lara recalls the past, her daughters examine their own lives and relationship with their mother, and are forced to reconsider the world and everything they thought they knew.”

