



HEALTH AND FAMILY

Digestive health expert explains healthy gut benefits

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The digestive system plays a big role in keeping us in good health, both physical and mental. Our gut acts as a "second brain" that is responsible for balancing our mood, reducing stress and anxiety, and keeping our overall mental health.

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MANILA, Philippines – Taking symbiotics, a mix of probiotics and prebiotics, can be beneficial to the increased health of one's gut, according to a digestive health expert.

Dr. Patricia Anne Cabral-Prodigalidad, who specializes in Gastroenterology, spoke to members of the media including **Philstar.com**, at the invitation of ProMedica's NutraHealthyGut, to explain the benefits one can obtain through consuming symbiotics.

Prodigalidad began by explaining the importance of gut microorganisms, where the human body routinely harbors 10^{12-14} bacteria, some of which are good, harmful, or have no effect.

"Good microbes synthesize and excrete vitamins, prevent pathogens," the doctor said. "Colonization [meanwhile] could antagonize other bacteria."

She then pointed out the difference between probiotics and prebiotics, the former being live microorganisms that when administered adequately can be beneficial like *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium*.

The doctor stressed that probiotics can only be called as such if healthy results have been shown in controlled studies, and these can be found in fermented food or formulated consumables like yogurt, kimchi, sauerkraut, health bars, milk formula, and dietary supplements.

Prebiotics, meanwhile, are food for the gut microbes, which are best found in high-fiber foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes (beans).

Prodigalidad said the recommended daily intake of fiber is 25 to 38 grams, however, the regular daily intake is only 16 grams.

Probiotics and prebiotics together form a symbiosis, symbiotics, where short-chain fatty acids like Acetate, Butyrate, and Propionate can lead to a number of multiple health benefits.

Nourished cells lining the gut reduces the risk of cancer, enhances the absorption of nutrients especially calcium, and relieves constipation and Diarrhea. Symbiotics in the bloodstream can also increase brain signalling and regulate the immune system.

Other symbiotics health benefits Prodigalidad mentioned were obesity prevention, controlled cholesterol build-up, as well as studies showing there may be a connection to relieving mental health issues like anxiety, depression, Alzheimer's, and Parkinsons.

The doctor's parting advice to changing one's gut microbiome are as follows:

- incorporating probiotic-rich food into one's diet (yogurt, kimchi, sauerkraut, kombucha, pickles, miso, and fermented food)
- adding prebiotic-rich food (bananas, onions, garlics, leeks, asparagus, artichokes, soybeans)
- taking food, drinks, and dietary supplements formulated with probiotics and prebiotics

Prodigalidad added that excess probiotics get passed on in one's stool, and that individuals undergoing chemotherapy or immunosuppressants should first discuss with their doctors before consuming more probiotics.

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