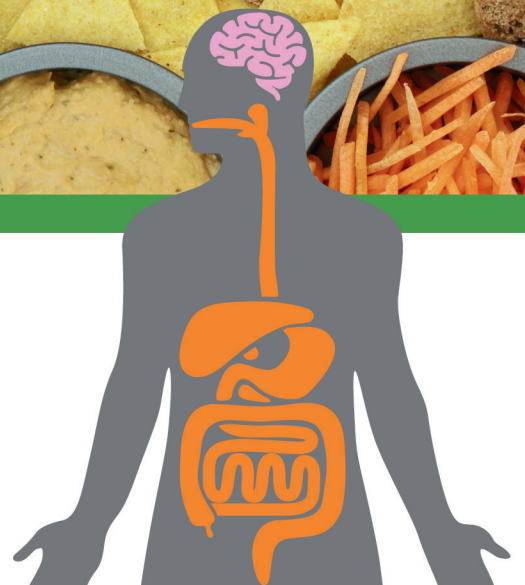


Gut Check

Metabolism • Immunity • Mental Health



commonhealth.virginia.gov • wellness@dhrm.virginia.gov



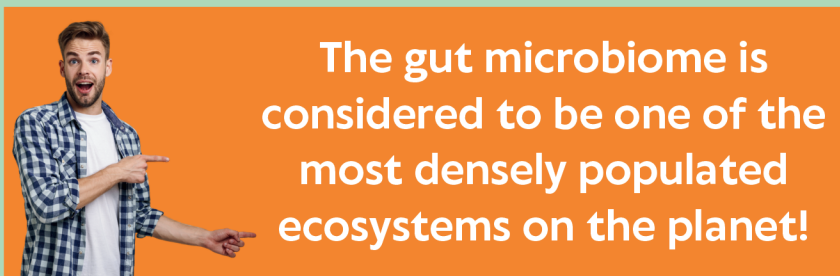
Meet the Microbiome

As scientific as it sounds, a microbiome is a group of microorganisms (tiny living things such as bacteria, fungi, viruses, etc.) that live together in one place. **The gut microbiome lives inside your intestines and is home to trillions of microorganisms.**

Each person has a unique gut microbiome influenced by diet and environmental factors, including pollutants, medications, and very early life experiences such as delivery method and breastfeeding. Some of these exposures expand and help the gut microbiome, while others reduce and harm it.

Think of your intestines as its own ecosystem. In this ecosystem, **your body can have over 1,000 different species of bacteria.** That's a lot living inside your gut!

While some can be harmful, **certain species of bacteria are incredibly beneficial and necessary for good health.** Having a variety of gut bacteria is essential.





5 Reasons Gut Health Matters

1. **Nutrient Absorption:** A healthy gut helps the small intestine absorb nutrients from the foods we eat to be used for energy and growth.

2. **Immunity:** About 70% of the immune system is in the gut. A strong gut helps fight infection and prevent disease.

3. **Inflammation:** The gut lining blocks harmful substances from entering the bloodstream. A weak gut barrier, known as “leaky gut”, can trigger the immune system causing inflammation which can lead to diseases like diabetes and heart disease.

4. **Mental Health:** The gut and brain are connected. Gut bacteria produce neurotransmitters like serotonin, which affect mood and mental health. Imbalances may lead to anxiety or depression.

5. **Metabolism:** Gut bacteria help control weight, insulin levels, and the risk of metabolic diseases such as type 2 diabetes.

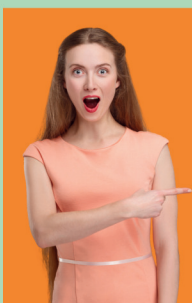
~ 70% of the
immune
system is in
the gut!



Serotonin
enhances
mood and is
primarily
produced in
the gut!



A healthy gut helps reduce the
risk of conditions such as
type 2 diabetes, heart disease,
colorectal cancer, inflammatory
bowel disease, and more!





MYTH
1

Probiotic supplements are best for gut health.

FACTS

Studies show that **probiotic supplements aren't universally effective and can even delay microbiome recovery** after antibiotics. Therefore, the best way to benefit from probiotic supplements is to get a recommendation from a doctor who can use advanced diagnostic methods to determine which specific strains may help you.

MYTH
2

Beans and grains are inflammatory foods.

FACTS

Regular **consumption of whole grains and beans has actually been shown to decrease inflammation.** The single greatest predictor of a healthy gut microbiome is the diversity of plants, and associated fiber, in your diet.

MYTH
3

Juice cleanses detoxify the digestive system.

FACTS

Your body naturally rids itself of toxins through the coordinated efforts of several organs and systems, including the liver, kidneys, and digestive system. **Juice cleanses are unnecessary and lack essential nutrients** for energy and gut health, such as protein, fats, and fiber.

MYTH
4

You should have a bowel movement every day.

FACTS

Bowel habits vary from person to person. Research shows that **normal frequency ranges from three times a day to three times a week.** Factors like diet, hydration, activity levels, and stress all influence regularity.

Recipe for a Healthy Gut

Include probiotics and prebiotics.



Add foods rich in probiotics and prebiotics to help populate the gut with beneficial bacteria and enhance immune function.

Eat more fiber.



Start by building your meals around fiber-rich foods, such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. Fiber promotes the growth of good bacteria and reduces inflammation.

Stay hydrated.

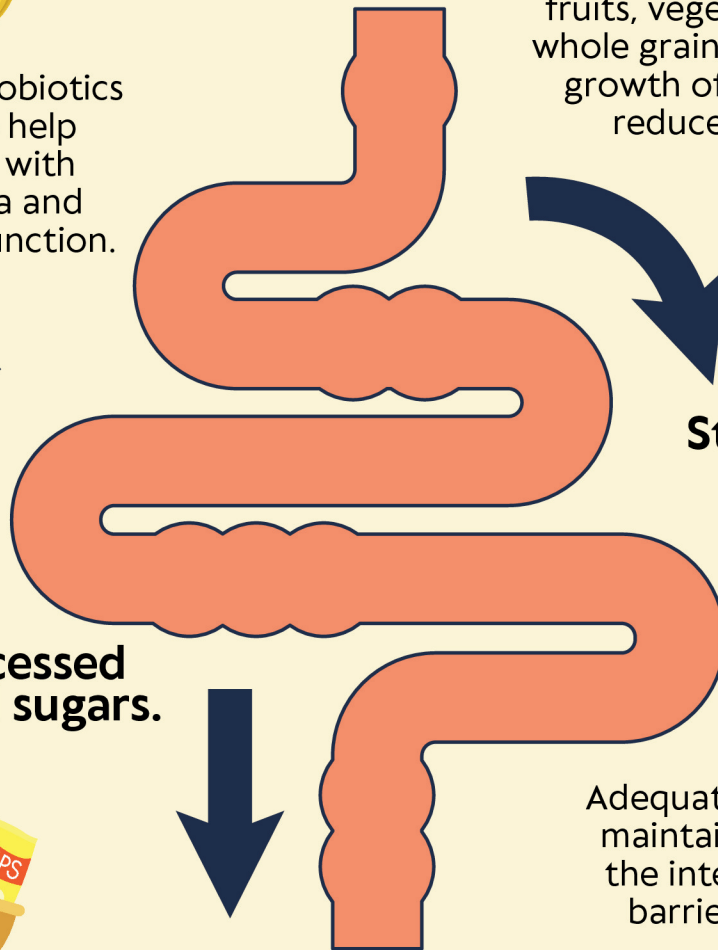


Adequate hydration is crucial to maintain the mucosal lining of the intestines, which acts as a barrier against pathogens.

Limit ultra-processed foods and added sugars.



Ultra-processed foods and too much added sugar can disrupt the balance of gut bacteria and promote the growth of harmful microbes.



Examples of Probiotic Foods

Foods with live, active cultures contain probiotics that help grow more good gut bacteria.



low sugar yogurt



kefir



kombucha



fermented pickles



kimchi



sauerkraut



tempeh



cottage, cheddar, mozzarella, and gouda cheeses

Examples of Prebiotic Foods

Foods with fiber contain prebiotics that feed the bacteria that keep your gut healthy.



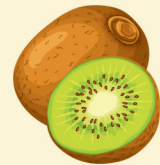
bananas



garlic and onions



berries



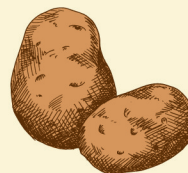
kiwis



beans and legumes



oats



potatoes



barley

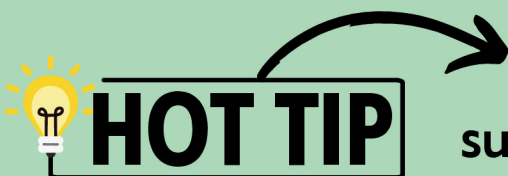
Probiotics and prebiotics can work together to support gut health and help manage blood sugar in type 2 diabetes.



Foods to Limit or Avoid

To improve gut health, it's best to **limit or avoid certain types of foods** such as:

- **Ultra-Processed & Sugary Foods**
 - Ultra-processed snacks, like chips, cookies, and candy
 - Sugary drinks, like soda and fruit juices with added sugar
 - Artificial sweeteners, like aspartame and sucralose
 - Refined grains, like white bread, white rice, and pastries
- **Unhealthy Fats**
 - Fried foods and ultra-processed snacks
 - Processed vegetable oils, like soybean, corn, and canola oil
 - Margarine and trans fats found in ultra-processed baked goods
- **Dairy & Gluten (for some people)**
 - If lactose intolerant, avoid conventional dairy (milk, cheese, etc.)
 - If gluten sensitive/have celiac disease, avoid gluten-containing foods made with grains, like wheat, barley, and rye (traditional bread, pasta, cereal, beer, etc.)
- **Artificial & Preservative-Heavy Foods**
 - Processed meats, like hot dogs, bacon, and sausages
 - Packaged foods with additives and preservatives
- **Alcohol and Excessive Caffeine (more than 400mg of caffeine per day)**



Focus on whole foods to help support a healthy gut microbiome!

Eating for Gut Health: A Sample Menu

Breakfast

Berry and Banana Overnight Oats*

Mash half a banana and mix with 1 cup each of oats and low-fat or nondairy milk. Cover and refrigerate overnight or several hours. Top with berries and sprinkle with chia seeds, unsweetened coconut flakes, or cacao nibs if desired.

**Inspired by [eatingwell.com/recipe/268085/blueberry-banana-overnight-oats](https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/268085/blueberry-banana-overnight-oats)*

Beverage

8 oz. coffee (black), water, or unsweetened tea



AM Snack

1 cup blackberries
¼ cup almonds

8 oz. Kefir, water, or unsweetened tea

Lunch

Veggie Pita with Hummus*

Stuff a whole-wheat pita with 2 tablespoons hummus and ½ cup each of mixed salad greens and roasted vegetables (e.g.: onions, bell pepper, eggplant, etc.). Sprinkle with 1 tablespoon crumbled feta cheese.

**Inspired by [eatingwell.com/recipe/266299/mediterranean-veggie-wrap-with-cilantro-hummus](https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/266299/mediterranean-veggie-wrap-with-cilantro-hummus)*

Beverage

8 oz. water or unsweetened tea





PM Snack

½ cup cottage cheese
1 medium apple
16 oz. water

Dinner

Burrito Bowls*

Layer ½ cup black beans, 3 oz. shredded chicken, and ¼ cup cheddar cheese onto ¾ cup quinoa or brown rice. Top with 1 tablespoon plain Greek yogurt and ¾ cup cabbage salad (made by tossing 4½ cups thinly sliced cabbage and ½ cup finely chopped red onion with 2 tablespoons each of olive oil and rice vinegar and ¼ teaspoon each of salt and pepper).

**Inspired by eatingwell.com/recipe/251162/tex-mex-black-bean-quinoa-bowl*

Beverage

8 oz. water or iced herbal tea



Dessert

Chocolate Quinoa Crunch Bark*

Melt 1 cup dark chocolate chips and mix in 2 cups quinoa puffs. Spread mixture evenly in an 8-inch square baking pan lined with wax paper. Cool for at least 2 hours, then remove and cut into 16 squares.

**Inspired by weightwatchers.com/us/recipe/chocolate-quinoa-crunch-bark/615b661dae7952057b960f27*

Beverage

8 oz. herbal tea or water



How a Short Walk Helps!

Walking doesn't just improve heart health—it's good for gut health too!

- **Stimulated Digestion:** Walking after a meal jump-starts the digestive system, helping food move through the intestines more efficiently.
- **Reduced Bloating and Gas:** Movement can help improve digestion and prevent the buildup of gas, reducing bloating and discomforts.
- **Increased Variety of Gut Bacteria:** Exercise has been shown to enhance diversity of the gut microbiome, particularly bacteria that help prevent leaky gut syndrome.

Improved gut health **reduces the risk of metabolic disease** in general, and walking after meals can be particularly helpful for preventing or better managing type 2 diabetes.

- **Improved Insulin Sensitivity:** This means sugar can move more easily from the bloodstream into cells where it's converted to energy.
- **Reduced Blood Sugar Spikes:** Taking a short walk after a meal can help prevent rapid spikes in blood sugar that may occur after eating.



Plan your next stroll tonight! It doesn't have to be strenuous. A light walk is sufficient.





Stress and Gut Health

Stress slows down the production of serotonin, a “feel good” chemical produced primarily in the gut. Serotonin is involved in learning, memory, sleep, happiness, digestion, body temperature regulation, and more.

Stress decreases the rate of digestion and causes an imbalance in the gut bacteria. When stress is chronic, the response is also chronic. Digestion that is continually slowed can lead to symptoms like constipation, cramps, and bloating.

 HOT TIP

Three Rs of Stress Management

How we manage stress can make all the difference. Focus on functional, healthy stress management techniques with the three Rs by asking yourself these questions:

Resolve. How can I eliminate the stressor?

Refocus. How can I change my perspective or redirect my attention?

Reduce. How can I decrease my exposure to the stressor?

See the table below for an example of one way to use the three Rs for help managing the stressor of driving during rush hour.

STRESSOR	RESOLVE	REFOCUS	REDUCE
Rush hour driving	Use public transportation	Listen to relaxing music	Explore flexible work schedules

Sleep & the Gut Microbiome

Adequate sleep is important for keeping our gut microbiome balanced and healthy, and **having a balanced microbiome can help** us get better sleep.

While it can be challenging to break an unhealthy cycle, **there are things you can do** to improve both sleep and gut health.

HOT TIPS

- **Practice good sleep hygiene.** Create a cool, dark, and quiet place to sleep. Aim to go to bed and wake up at about the same time each day.
- **Re-learn to relax.** Prepare your body and mind for sleep with calming, relaxing practices such as meditation, deep breathing, and stretching.
- **Get regular physical activity.** Aim to be active for at least 30 minutes per day, 5 days per week. Feel free to break it up into shorter bouts of activity if needed, such as 10 minutes of activity 3 times per day.
- **Eat mindfully and healthfully.** Eat slowly and include a variety of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and reduced-fat dairy products. Limit caffeine, alcohol, and added sugars.
- **Eat your last bite 2-3 hours before bedtime.** Allowing time to digest before bed decreases the chances of acid reflux and blood sugar spikes throughout the night.





When to See a Doctor

Consider **seeing a doctor** if you have any of the following:

- Persistent symptoms lasting more than 2-3 weeks, such as:
 - Stomach pain
 - Bloating
 - Nausea
 - Diarrhea
 - Constipation
- Symptoms that disrupt your daily life
- Feelings of fullness after eating very little
- Unexplained changes in bowel movements such as:
 - Bloody, black, or tarry stools
 - Persistent diarrhea or constipation
- A family history of digestive conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or colon cancer
- Unexplained weight loss



HOT TIPS

Make the Most of Your Appointment

Keep a **journal of your symptoms** prior to seeing your healthcare provider and take it with you to your appointment. This will help you give your provider the information they need to identify the best possible diagnosis and treatment plan.

Make a **list of questions** and take it, with your symptom journal, to your appointment. Some questions you may want to ask include:

- What could be causing my symptoms?
- What tests do you recommend?
- How can I feel better in the meantime?
- Is there anything I should avoid?

Help From Your Health Plan

Improving your gut health is a fantastic step towards overall wellness, and it's great to know that your health plan might have some helpful resources just waiting for you! Start by taking a **look at your health plan's benefits to see what's covered**, especially when it comes to nutrition and digestive health.

You might find options such as consultations with a dietitian or a gastroenterologist that can provide tailored advice. Virtual visits may be available to help you save time and meet with providers from the comfort of home.



If you're unsure about anything, **contact your health plan**. They are there to help you navigate the available resources. Make the most of your benefits to help you take informed steps and **get the support you need** to boost your gut health.



COVA

[dhrm.virginia.gov/
employeebenefits/health-benefits](https://dhrm.virginia.gov/employeebenefits/health-benefits)



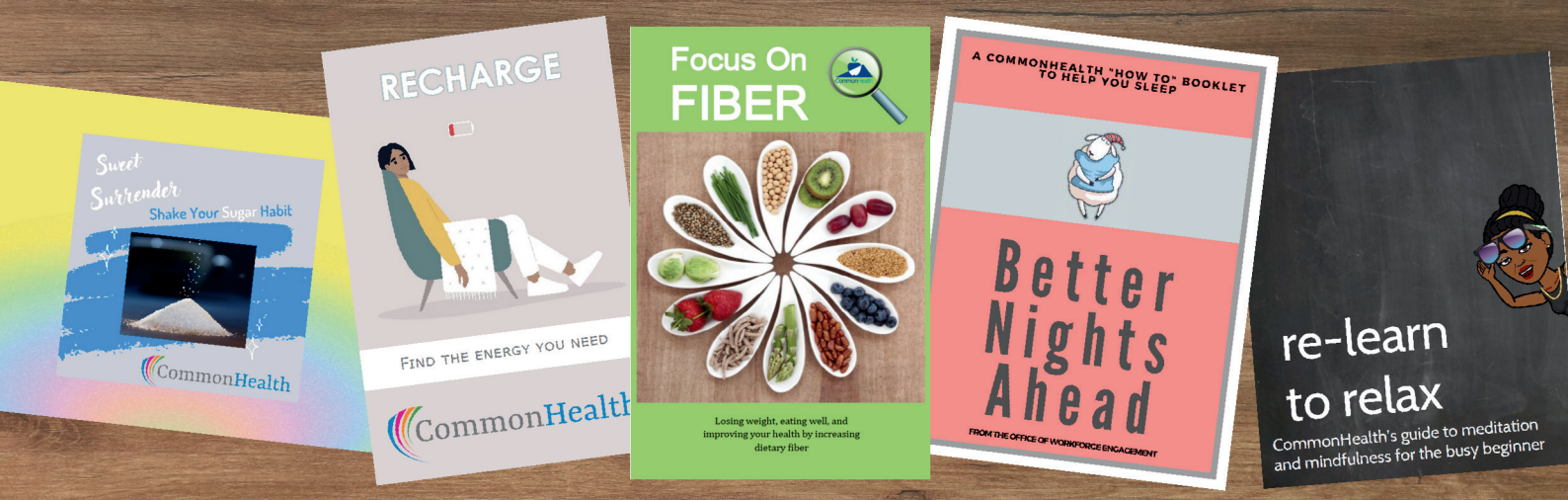
Scan QR code to visit your
Health Benefits page



TLC

[thelocalchoice.virginia.gov/
planinfo/employeeplans.html](https://thelocalchoice.virginia.gov/planinfo/employeeplans.html)





Continue Learning with CommonHealth

CommonHealth has a variety of materials to help you further explore related topics. Want to learn how to...

- **decrease added sugar?** Treat yourself to ***Sweet Surrender!***
- **sleep better?** Catch more z's with ***Better Nights Ahead!***
- **eat more fiber?** Check out ***Focus on Fiber!***
- **stress less?** Unwind with ***Recharge*** and ***Re-Learn to Relax.***

Visit our website at commonhealth.virginia.gov for details on these topics and more. Email our wellness team at wellness@dhrm.virginia.gov to schedule a presentation.

Helpful Resources

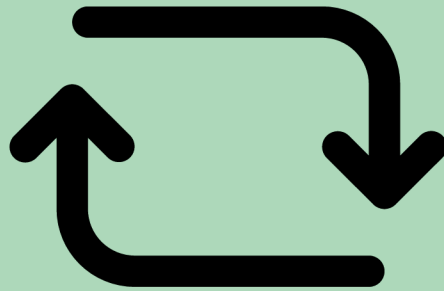
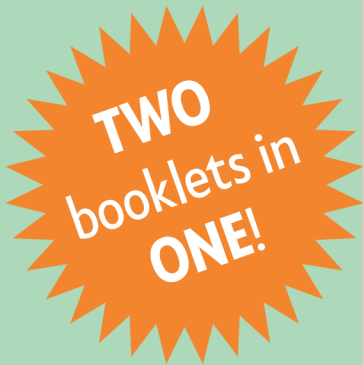
Still hungry for more? Search the websites below for topics of interest.

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics:
eatright.org | • Harvard Health Publishing:
health.harvard.edu |
| • American Diabetes Association:
diabetes.org | • John Hopkins Medicine:
hopkinsmedicine.org |
| • American Medical Association:
ama-assn.org | • Mayo Clinic: mayoclinic.org |
| • The Better Sleep Council:
bettersleep.org | • MyPlate: myplate.gov |
| • Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: cdc.gov | • National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases:
niddk.nih.gov |
| • Cleveland Clinic: clevelandclinic.org | • National Sleep Foundation: thensf.org |
| • Eating Well: eatingwell.com | • USDA Nutrition: nutrition.gov |
| | • WeightWatchers: weightwatchers.com |

FLIP

the Book

to view the **Gut Healthy Recipes** booklet



to view the **Gut Check** booklet



APPLE-BLUEBERRY CRUMBLE

Whole wheat flour has a nutty flavor and is higher in fiber and prebiotics than white flour. Find it in the baking aisle.



Ingredients – 6 servings

3 large Red or Golden Delicious apples (about 2 lbs), unpeeled and cut into ½-inch pieces (about 4 cups)
2 Tbsp brown sugar
2 Tbsp whole wheat flour
1 tsp vanilla extract
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries

Topping

1/2 cup walnuts, very finely chopped
1/2 cup old-fashioned or quick-cooking oats
2 Tbsp brown sugar
2 Tbsp whole wheat flour
1/8 tsp ground cinnamon
1/8 tsp salt
2 Tbsp canola oil

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Place the apples, brown sugar, flour, vanilla, and cinnamon in a large bowl and toss to coat. Gently stir in the blueberries. Place the apple mixture in an 8 x 8-inch baking pan or dish and set aside. To make the topping, place the walnuts, oats, brown sugar, flour, flaxseed, cinnamon, and salt in a medium bowl and stir to combine. Add the oil and stir until the oat mixture is well coated. Spread the topping evenly over the fruit mixture. Bake 40–45 minutes, or until the fruit is tender and the topping is golden brown (cover with foil about halfway through if the topping browns too quickly).

Recipe courtesy of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

FRUIT CHEWY COOKIES



Bananas are high in fiber, resistant starches, and prebiotics. Find them in the produce section.

Ingredients – 24 servings

3 bananas, peeled
2 cups rolled oats
1 cup raisins
1/2 cup walnuts, chopped (optional)
2 Tbsp apple butter
1 ½ Tbsp canola oil
1 tsp vanilla extract
Nonstick cooking spray

Instructions

Heat oven to 350°F. Spray a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray. Mash the bananas in a mixing bowl. Add oats, raisins, walnuts (if using), apple butter, oil, and vanilla to the mixing bowl. Mix well with the bananas. NOTE: You can toast the walnuts for more flavor. Let stand for 10 minutes. Drop by teaspoonful onto the baking sheet. Bake for 15–20 minutes until browned. Remove and let cool for at least 10 minutes.

GARLIC-THYME CHICKEN WITH CAULIFLOWER, POTATOES, & OLIVES



Unpeeled potatoes provide prebiotics, like resistant starch, especially when cooked and cooled before consumed. Find them in the produce section.

Ingredients – 4 servings

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1 tsp kosher salt
1/4 tsp black pepper
1 Tbsp balsamic glaze (store-bought)
1 tsp fresh thyme
1 clove garlic, finely minced
2 lbs cauliflower, cut into florets
12 oz. baby potatoes, cut in half
2 medium shallots, sliced lengthwise
4 tsp extra virgin olive oil
16 large green olives, pitted
1 medium lemon
1/3 cup fresh parsley, coarsely chopped

Instructions

Preheat oven to 450°F. In a shallow bowl, coat chicken with balsamic glaze, thyme, and garlic. Sprinkle with half the salt and pepper; set aside. On a sheet pan, combine cauliflower, potatoes, and shallots; toss with oil and remaining salt and pepper. Spread evenly and bake until brown, 20–25 mins. Remove the pan from oven and toss veggies. Add chicken, making sure each piece touches the pan. Return to oven and bake until chicken is cooked through, 10–15 mins. Toss in olives. Zest lemon over sheet pan, then cut it in half and squeeze juice over top; sprinkle with parsley and serve.

HORSERADISH-CRUSTED SALMON WITH CRISPY LEEKS

Horseradish is a root vegetable used to make a tangy sauce by the same name. It may help stimulate digestive enzymes and reduce inflammation. Find it in the condiment aisle.



Ingredients – 4 servings

1 ½ pounds salmon fillet, cut into 4 portions
1/2 tsp salt, divided
1/2 tsp ground pepper, divided
2 Tbsp mayonnaise
1 Tbsp prepared horseradish
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 medium leek, white and pale green parts only, cut into matchsticks
3 Tbsp cornstarch

Instructions

Preheat oven to 425°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil. Pat salmon dry and place on the prepared baking sheet. Sprinkle with 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Mix mayonnaise and horseradish in a small bowl and brush over the salmon. Roast until the salmon is opaque in the center, 7 to 10 minutes. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Toss the leek with cornstarch and add to the pan. Cook, separating the leek strands with tongs as they cook, until crispy and golden brown, 5 to 8 minutes. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels and sprinkle with the remaining salt and pepper. Serve the salmon topped with the leek.

Recipe courtesy of Eating Well

SAVORY PENNE WITH LENTILS AND KALE

Lentils are edible seeds from the legume family. They're high in protein, fiber, and prebiotics. Find them with the dried beans, usually in the soup aisle.



Ingredients – 6 servings

1/2 cup brown lentils
1 Tbsp light olive oil
1/2 cup onion, chopped
1 tsp garlic, minced
2 cups dry whole wheat penne pasta
1 1/2 cups canned crushed tomatoes

1/4 tsp salt
1/8 tsp black pepper
1/2 tsp dried oregano
1/2 tsp dried basil
1 cup frozen kale, chopped
1/4 cup walnuts, chopped
2 Tbsp fresh parsley, for garnish

Instructions

Rinse lentils in a fine mesh strainer and remove any debris.

Heat olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat for 1 minute. Add onions and cook 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add garlic and cook 1 minute, stirring constantly.

To the pan, add lentils, pasta, crushed tomatoes, 2 1/2 cups water, salt, black pepper, oregano and basil. Stir to combine, then cover with a lid and reduce heat to low. Set a timer for 18 minutes.

After the timer goes off, lift the lid and place the frozen kale on top of the mixture. Replace the lid and cook for another 4 minutes, or until the lentils are tender. Serve in bowls and top evenly with chopped walnuts and parsley.

KALE CAESAR SALAD WITH GRILLED SHRIMP

Kale is a leafy green vegetable great for adding fiber and prebiotics to salads, savory dishes, and even smoothies. Find it in the produce or frozen veggies section.



Ingredients – 4 servings

- 4 sprays cooking spray
- 1 ½ lbs large uncooked shrimp, peeled & deveined
- 1 tsp lemon zest, grated
- 1 clove garlic crushed with a garlic press, divided
- 1/4 tsp table salt, divided
- 2 uncooked anchovies, rinsed and well mashed; or 1 tsp anchovy paste
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp plain Greek yogurt
- 2 Tbsp mayonnaise
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 1/2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1/8 tsp black pepper
- 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- 3/4 lb kale (1 bunch), stems and tough ribs removed, leaves thinly sliced
- 1/2-ounce Parmesan cheese, shaved

Instructions

In a medium bowl, toss the shrimp, lemon zest, 1/4 tsp of the garlic, and 1/8 tsp of the salt. In a large bowl, whisk the anchovies, lemon juice, yogurt, mayonnaise, oil, mustard, black pepper, and the remaining garlic and salt. Whisk in the grated cheese. Add the kale and toss until the kale is completely coated.

Coat a large grill pan with cooking spray and preheat over medium-high. Arrange the shrimp in a single layer on the pan (working in batches if necessary) and grill until just opaque in the centers, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Divide the salad and shrimp among 4 plates. Garnish with the shaved cheese.

SEARED BARBECUE TEMPEH SALAD



Tempeh is a fermented soybean product high in protein, fiber, and probiotics. Find it in the refrigerated area of most produce sections.

Ingredients – 4 servings

8 ounces tempeh
1 red bell pepper, thinly sliced
3 oz. barbecue sauce
2 tsp olive oil
1 head romaine lettuce, chopped
1 English cucumber, thinly sliced
1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
1/3 cup Catalina dressing

Instructions

Slice tempeh crosswise into thin strips and place in a medium bowl. Add bell peppers and barbecue sauce, and gently stir to coat. Preheat large skillet over medium-high heat. Add oil to hot skillet and swirl to coat bottom. Add bell peppers and cook until tender, about 10 mins. Reduce heat to low and add tempeh. Cook until tempeh is browned and warmed to no more than 115°F, about 4–5 mins. Remove from heat. To serve, divide romaine, cucumber, and tomatoes between dishes. Top with tempeh and peppers, and drizzle with dressing.

VEGGIE SANDWICH WITH LEMONY BLACK BEAN SPREAD

Black beans provide plant-based protein and prebiotics, particularly resistant starches. Find them in the canned or dried bean section.



Ingredients – 4 servings

1 large red bell pepper, cored and quartered
15 oz canned black beans, rinsed and drained
1 clove garlic, smashed
2 Tbsp lemon juice
1 Tbsp olive oil
1 tsp ground cumin
1/4 tsp salt
8 slices whole wheat bread, toasted
1/2 small English cucumber, thinly sliced
1 cup baby spinach
1/2 medium avocado, thinly sliced

Instructions

Preheat broiler. Place pepper quarters on a rimmed baking sheet, skin-side up; broil 5 minutes. Rotate pan; broil until skin is blackened and blistered, about 3 to 5 minutes more. Transfer peppers to a bowl; tightly cover. Let peppers steam until cool enough to handle, about 10 to 15 minutes; remove skin with your hands and cut pepper quarters into strips. Place beans, garlic, lemon juice, oil, cumin and salt in bowl of a food processor; process until smooth.

Spread about 1/4 cup bean mixture on each of 4 slices toast; top each with 1/4 of roasted pepper, cucumber and spinach. Spread avocado onto remaining slices toast; top sandwiches with toast and serve.

Recipe courtesy of WeightWatchers®

BUTTERNUT SQUASH AND APPLE SOUP

Butternut squash is a good source of fiber and prebiotics. Find it in the produce or frozen vegetable section.



Ingredients – 4 servings

1 onion, chopped
1 celery stalk, chopped
1 carrot, chopped
2 Tbsp olive oil
4 cups water
1 butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and chopped
1 tart apple, peeled, cored, and chopped
1 Tbsp low-sodium bouillon
1/8 tsp cayenne pepper
1/8 tsp ground black pepper
1/8 tsp ground cinnamon
1/8 tsp ground nutmeg
1/8 tsp salt

Instructions

In a stockpot, add the onion, celery, carrot, and oil. Sauté for about 5 minutes or until the vegetables are tender.
Add water, squash, apple, and bouillon to the pot. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, then cover and simmer. Continue cooking for 30 minutes or until the squash and carrots are soft.
Carefully transfer soup to a food processor or blender and puree. (NOTE: If an immersion blender is available, the soup does not need to be transferred.) Add seasonings. Serve warm.

Recipe courtesy of the Eat Right Move More Virginia

GRILLED VEGGIE WRAP



Hummus is a dip or spread made from cooked, mashed chickpeas. It's high in fiber, protein, and prebiotics. Find it in the deli section or with the refrigerated dips.

Ingredients – 4 servings

1 Tbsp olive oil
2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
1/4 tsp black pepper
1 medium zucchini, sliced lengthwise into 8 slices
1 medium yellow squash, sliced lengthwise into 8 slices
1 red bell pepper, sliced into 4 slices
4 large whole wheat tortillas (about 10-inch diameter)
1/2 cup hummus
8 fresh basil leaves

Instructions

Preheat an indoor or outdoor grill. In a large bowl, whisk together olive oil, balsamic vinegar and ground black pepper. Add sliced zucchini, squash, and bell pepper to marinade and let sit for 5 minutes.

Grill the vegetables about 2–3 minutes on both sides.

Lay out the tortilla and spread with 2 Tbsp hummus, then add two fresh basil leaves and top with 2 slices of zucchini, 2 slices of yellow squash, and 1 slice bell pepper. Fold in the two sides of the tortilla and roll like a burrito.

BERRY AND BARLEY SPINACH SALAD

Hulled barley is a whole grain with a chewy texture and a mild, nutty flavor. It's a good source of fiber and prebiotics. Look for it in the rice or cereal aisle.



Ingredients – 10 servings

2 cups barley, cooked and cooled*

1 Tbsp olive oil

Juice and zest of 1 lime

5 ounces (4 cups) fresh baby spinach

1/4 cup red onion, finely chopped

2 Tbsp fresh basil, chopped

1 avocado, diced

2 cups fresh or defrosted berries (strawberries, raspberries,

blueberries or blackberries)

Salt and pepper, to taste (optional)

Instructions

In a large bowl, gently mix together barley, olive oil, lime juice and zest, spinach, red onion, fresh basil, salt and pepper (if using).

Gently fold in avocado and berries. Serve immediately or chill and serve within 2 hours.

*Note: Hulled barley is a healthier option than pearled barley since it is a whole grain and pearled barley is not. If hulled barley is not available, consider using another whole grain such as farro, quinoa, or brown rice.

Recipe courtesy of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

MANGO GUACAMOLE

Avocados are excellent sources of healthy fats, fiber, and prebiotics. Find them in the fresh produce section.



Ingredients – About 1 ½ cup serving

2 avocados, chopped
2 small mangoes, diced
1/4 cup diced red onion
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 serrano pepper, minced
1/4 cup chopped cilantro
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
1/4 to 1/2 tsp salt

Instructions

In a medium bowl, stir together the avocado and mango, smashing the avocado.
Stir in the onion, garlic, pepper, and cilantro.
Add the lemon zest, lemon juice, and salt to taste.
Serve immediately, or cover the surface of the guacamole with plastic wrap and refrigerate for up to one day.

Recipe courtesy of the Foundation for Fresh Produce

LAYERED BLACK BEAN DIP

Cheddar cheese made with live, active cultures is a good source of protein and probiotics—and can be low in lactose when aged. Find it in the deli or dairy section.



Ingredients – 16 servings

1 can black beans, low-sodium (15 ounces, drained and rinsed)
1/4 tsp onion powder
1/4 tsp dried oregano
1/8 tsp garlic powder
1/8 tsp cayenne pepper
1/2 cup salsa
1/2 cup sour cream
1/4 cup chopped green onion
2 ounces aged cheddar cheese, grated

Instructions

Mash beans and mix with onion powder, dried oregano, garlic powder, and cayenne pepper. Spread on a serving dish.
Top with salsa, sour cream, green onions, and grated cheese. Serve as a dip for raw vegetables such as celery, carrot sticks, and pepper slices.

ROASTED VEGETABLE OMELETTE



Zucchini is a good source of fiber and prebiotics, especially when eaten unpeeled. Find it in the produce or frozen vegetable section.

Ingredients – 4 servings

1 medium uncooked zucchini, diced
1 medium, uncooked yellow summer squash, diced
1 medium, green bell pepper, seeded and diced
1 medium uncooked potato, diced
1 medium tomato, diced
1 medium onion, diced
1 Tbsp fresh rosemary, chopped
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp pepper
6 large egg whites, lightly beaten
1/4 low fat cream cheese with herbs

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Combine the zucchini, yellow squash, bell pepper, potato, tomato, onion, rosemary, salt, and pepper in a large bowl; lightly spray with olive-oil nonstick spray. Spread the vegetables in a large nonstick baking sheet. Roast on the bottom rack of the oven, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender and browned, about 25 minutes.

Spray a large nonstick skillet with nonstick spray and set over medium heat. Add the egg whites and cook until just set, 3–4 minutes, lifting the edges frequently with a spatula to let the uncooked egg flow underneath. Spoon the vegetable mixture over the eggs, then sprinkle the cheese. Cover the skillet and cook until the cheese melts, 2–3 minutes. Fold the omelette in half and slide out onto a plate. Divide into fourths to serve.

Recipe courtesy of WeightWatchers®

SPINACH-QUINOA SCRAMBLE



Quinoa is a seed often eaten like a grain. It's an excellent source of fiber, prebiotics, and plant-based protein. Find it in most grain or rice aisles.

Ingredients – 1 serving

4 sprays cooking spray
2 cups baby spinach
1/2 cup cooked quinoa
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
1 pinch kosher salt
1 pinch black pepper
1 Tbsp crumbled feta cheese

Instructions

Coat a nonstick skillet with nonstick spray; heat over medium-low. Add spinach; toss until wilted, about 2 minutes. Add quinoa; cook 1 minute. Add eggs, salt, and pepper. Stir constantly to scramble eggs, about 1 minute. Sprinkle with feta.

GUT HEALTHY RECIPES



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