The Purposeful Life PODCAST with Nora Knadjian-Kachian

Gut Health Cheat Sheet

Understanding Prebiotics, Probiotics, and Postbiotics

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1. Prebiotics: “Food for Your Good Bacteria”

What they are:
Nondigestible fibers that feed your beneficial gut microbes.

How they work:
They travel through your digestive system undigested, then get fermented by bacteria in your colon. This fermentation produces short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs**)** like butyrate -- which reduce inflammation, fuel your colon cells, and strengthen your gut barrier.

Natural food sources: Garlic, onions, leeks, asparagus, bananas (especially slightly green ones), oats, lentils and beans, cooled potatoes or rice (resistant starch)

Tips:
Start *slowly* to avoid bloating -- add one new fiber-rich food every few days and drink plenty of water.

2. Probiotics: “The Good Bacteria”

What they are:
Live microorganisms that provide a health benefit when taken in adequate amounts.

How they work:
They help restore balance in your gut by crowding out harmful bacteria, supporting your immune system, and producing vitamins and bioactive compounds.

Natural food sources: Yogurt with “live and active cultures,” kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, miso, tempeh, pickles (look for “raw” or “fermented”)

Supplement tips:

- Choose a clinically studied strain for your specific goal (e.g., *Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG* for antibiotic-associated diarrhea).
- Store according to the label (some require refrigeration).
- Avoid high-dose probiotics if you’re immunocompromised or critically ill -- talk to your doctor first.

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3. Postbiotics: “The After Effect”

What they are:
Inactive microbes and/or their beneficial byproducts -- including SCFAs, peptides, and cell components that still have biological effects.

Why they matter:
They help reduce inflammation, strengthen your gut barrier, and support your immune and nervous systems -- without needing to survive the digestive process.

How to support postbiotic production naturally:

- Eat a diverse, fiber-rich diet (feeds your microbiome so it can make postbiotics).
- Include fermented foods for extra microbial variety.
- Stay hydrated to support healthy digestion.

Supplement note:
Postbiotic products are still being researched -- focus on *food-first* strategies unless guided by a professional.

4. Putting It All Together

Type	What It Is	What It Does	Food Examples
Prebiotic	Fiber that feeds microbes	Fuels good bacteria & reduces inflammation	Garlic, onion, oats
Probiotic	Live good bacteria	Restores balance & supports immunity	Yogurt, kefir, kimchi
Postbiotic	Microbial byproducts	Strengthens gut barrier & reduces inflammation	SCFAs from fiber fermentation

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5. When “More” Isn’t Better

- Too much **fiber or prebiotics** too quickly → bloating, gas, or cramps
- Excessive **probiotics** → imbalance or infection risk (in vulnerable people)
- “Cleanses” or “detoxes” marketed as gut resets → often disrupt your natural microbiome balance

Go slow, stay consistent, and focus on variety over volume.

6. Quick Gut-Friendly Habits

Eat 25–35g of fiber daily (from whole foods)
✓ Include at least one fermented food a day
✓ Stay hydrated
✓ Move your body -- exercise supports gut motility
✓ Get quality sleep and manage stress (your gut-brain connection depends on it!)