

## TIPS TO BOOST PROBIOTIC INTAKE FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Lifeway Kefir and our plant based probiotic alternative, Plantiful®, can easily be used as a replacement or addition to your favorite recipes throughout the day to give them a nutrient-rich probiotic boost.

- ✦ Use your favorite flavor of Kefir or Plantiful® as the **base for any smoothie** or smoothie bowl recipe. In a time-crunch, grab an 8oz bottle of Kefir for on the go.
- ✦ Use Kefir to **makeover your breakfast** by spicing up a bowl of cereal or granola, or mix it into pancake or waffle batter.
- ✦ **Power up your overnight oats** or chia seed pudding by using Kefir or Plantiful®.
- ✦ **Replace cottage cheese with farmer cheese** to give a probiotic boost to your favorite dishes.
- ✦ Enjoy some **gourmet toast** with farmer cheese topped with sliced vegetables, berries, herbs or honey.
- ✦ **Choose kefir over mayo** or sour cream to cut calories and fat, without sacrificing flavor in your favorite dips and dressings.
- ✦ Add a **tangy and flavorful zip to soups**, hummus, snacks and spreads using your favorite flavor of Kefir or Plantiful®.
- ✦ Use Kefir as a **base for your next protein marinade**. Not only does Kefir's zippy, tangy flavor work well with herbs and spices to impart a fresh flavor, the lactic acid (in Kefir) and the live and active probiotic cultures turn tough cuts into tender, juicy masterpieces that the whole family will love.
- ✦ **Give your desserts a probiotic boost** with your favorite flavor of Kefir or Plantiful®. Either serve as a great base for puddings, popsicles, ice cream, frostings and more.



CHICAGO, IL

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**Lifeway**<sup>®</sup>  
EST. 1986

THE  
**Brain**  
Gut  
AXIS

## THE MICROBIOME

The human gastrointestinal tract is home to trillions of microbes called the gut microbiome.

**Our microbiome plays an active role in our immune system, mental health and bodily functions.**

When there are adverse changes or an imbalance of the microbiome, known as dysbiosis, our overall health and immunity may be affected. This balance can be disturbed during times of stress, with age, or when taking medications. However, our diet is considered to be one of the largest contributors to these changes in diversity.

Two parts of our diet that are uniquely able to affect the microbiome are probiotics and prebiotics.

**Probiotics are “good” bacteria.**

They are live microorganisms similar to the ones already living in the gut and may offer health benefits when consumed in adequate amounts. They're found in fermented foods and dairy products such as kefir, probiotic beverages, and dietary supplements.

**Prebiotics are non-living, non-digestible carbohydrates**

naturally found in a variety of foods, including fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. The body can't actually digest prebiotics, rather they're what probiotics feed off of to remain actively working in the digestive system. Together, they help create a balanced gut to keep our immune system and mind healthy.

Each 8-ounce serving of kefir contains 12 live and active cultures and 25 to 30 billion beneficial CFU (Colony Forming Units) to help maintain a healthy and balanced gut.

**What was once suspected as one-way communication (*brain to gut*) is now understood to be more of a *two-way system*, known as the *brain-gut axis*.**

With this two way system, researchers are finding that the health of our gut may directly impact the health of our minds.

**Our gut is comprised of millions of neurons called the enteric nervous system, sometimes called our second brain, which sends signals back to the brain along the vagus nerve for a two-way communication.**

For this to occur, neurons require neurotransmitters, which are compounds such as dopamine and serotonin. We also know that serotonin is a hormone that affects our mood, and low levels of serotonin in our brain may be linked to anxiety and depression.

Our microbiome plays an crucial role in the production of these compounds, and therefore a role in our mental health.

Along with noradrenaline, the gut microbiota is responsible producing 90% of the serotonin in our body, as well as precursors to these compounds, such as tryptophan.

**Research suggests that when the gut microbiome is in a state of imbalance, the production of these mood-boosting compounds may be decreased and not enough are sent to the receptors.**

In addition, emerging research is focusing on how gut health affects our brain health, including cognitive function, behavior and disease of the brain such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

## FOODS TO IMPROVE OUR MOOD

One of the simplest things we can do for our physical and mental health is to stock up on healthy foods. In particular, **probiotic-rich foods, such as those found in cultured dairy products like kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, and probiotic beverages may help balance our microbiome, making them a vital part of our mental health toolkit.**

In fact, there have been studies linking probiotic-rich foods to a balanced gut and a decrease in the risk for anxiety and depression.

An 8-ounce serving of kefir is an excellent source of protein, vitamin D, riboflavin, calcium and phosphorus, and a good source of vitamin A, vitamin B12, potassium and selenium.

**Foods with live and active probiotic cultures work by introducing good bacteria into the gut,**

creating diversity and balance in the microbiome. By helping to create a healthy balance, probiotics may maintain and increase serotonin production in the gut.

It's also important to note that just like a balanced diet, consuming a variety of probiotic foods is a smart choice for diversity of bacteria and nutrients introduced into the gut.

Some benefits of kefir and other dairy products is that they may buffer the acid in the stomach, which protects probiotics and increases the chance of them making their way through the digestive tract. Emerging research also suggests that the carbohydrates found in dairy products support the growth of the probiotics, thus making them more effective when consumed.