



## NUTRITION NOTES

### *Probiotics and their effect on health*

by Karen Lentner, MA, RD, LDN,  
Nutritionist, LifePath

Have you ever heard that a healthy gut is the key to a healthy body? Bacteria live throughout our bodies, and the millions of bacteria that live in our digestive system play an enormous role in our overall health. They help our digestion and absorption of food and nutrients, our brain health, and they also regulate our immune system and help fight infection. The mix of good and bad bacteria in our gut is different for everyone and may be affected by the types of food we eat, by stress, illness, lack of sleep, environmental factors, and medications, including antibiotics.



**Karen Lentner**  
MA, RD, LDN,  
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#### What can I do to keep my gut healthy?

Research has shown that a healthy gut has a balance of good and bad bacteria, and having several diverse bacteria is a good thing. Probiotics are beneficial, active, and live microorganisms that may help replace the good bacteria lost after taking antibiotics (why your doctor may tell you to eat yogurt while taking antibiotics) or consuming too much sugar. The term probiotic means “for life,” and probiotics are the good bacteria that help keep your body working the way it should.

Foods containing **probiotics** include:

- **Yogurt, buttermilk, and aged cheeses** such as gouda, and bleu

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- **Kefir**, a fermented drink similar to a drink-style yogurt
- **Raw sauerkraut** must be fermented with lactic acid bacteria; check the label as many do not contain probiotics
- **Kimchi**, a fermented Korean side dish of vegetables, mostly cabbage, and a variety of spices
- **Kombucha**, a flavored beverage produced by fermenting sweet tea with yeast and bacteria
- **Pickles**, fermented with a salty brine, not vinegar; check labels for probiotics
- **Sourdough bread** starter that contains Lactobacillus and wild yeast strains, making gluten more digestible
- **Miso**, a paste made from fermented soybeans that may be added to soups, marinades, and dressings
- **Tempeh**, fermented soybeans in a cake form, often used in stir fries, curries, or sandwiches

Most common probiotics include Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium - look for live active cultures on food labels!

In addition to probiotics, our bodies need **prebiotics** to help promote the growth of good bacteria in your gut. Prebiotics are a type of dietary fiber that feed and nourish the good bacteria in our gut and can reduce bloating and improve digestion and regularity.

Foods containing prebiotics include **asparagus, garlic, raw apple cider vinegar, onions, legumes, apples, leeks, bananas, oats, barley, wheat bran, and flax seeds.**

Try eating prebiotics and probiotics at the same time to create an environment where the good bacteria will survive. They may help treat conditions including diarrhea, constipation, IBS, eczema, symptoms of lactose intolerance, and allergies.

If possible, eat a mixture of foods before taking a supplement. Supplements aren’t regulated as medications are, so quality and ingredients vary. **KEEP YOUR GUT HEALTHY** – exercise regularly and focus on eating a healthy diet rich in probiotics and prebiotics daily or at least three times weekly!

*Find more Nutrition Notes articles online at [LifePathMA.org/news/stories/nutrition-notes](http://LifePathMA.org/news/stories/nutrition-notes). The Nutrition Department at LifePath manages the Meals on Wheels program and operates dining centers and luncheon clubs across Franklin County and the North Quabbin. Learn more by visiting [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org), calling 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259, or emailing [info@lifepathma.org](mailto:info@lifepathma.org).*

## CONGREGATE HOUSING

### *Winslow Wentworth House & Morgan-Allen House*

When choosing where you want to live, you might look for a place that feels private but also allows you to socialize with people nearby. If you’re an elder or a person with a disability, you may also be looking for a place that offers additional supportive services.

Congregate Housing offers a shared living environment that combines housing, in-home services, and a mutually supportive social environment for elders age 60 and older and younger folks with disabilities. Residents are able to live independently with available supportive services arranged by an on-site housing coordinator. LifePath administers the Winslow Wentworth House, in conjunction with the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, in Turners Falls and the Morgan Allen House, with the Greenfield Housing Authority, in Greenfield.

Craig lives at Winslow-Wentworth, where he says he has a sense of belonging. “I’ve made a lot of friends. All the people are very friendly here. Lot of us get together in the kitchen area, have coffee, talk about things and do different projects.” Craig enjoys making art and playing cards.



*Morgan-Allen House in Greenfield (left) and Winslow-Wentworth House in Turners Falls (right) provide private residences that offer socialization and supportive services.*

The Morgan-Allen House, a Victorian originally built in 1816, is located at 491 Main Street in Greenfield within walking distance of the library, the post office, shops, and the YMCA. Each person who lives at Morgan-Allen has a private room, with a combined bedroom/sitting room, kitchenette, and a half bath with sink and toilet. The kitchen, dining room, living room, laundry, and three shower areas are shared. A daily meal is served in the dining room.

Similarly, the Winslow-Wentworth House at 60 J Street in Turners Falls is within walking distance of stores, the post office, and the library, as well as banks and a park. The 17 private units feature a bedroom and kitchenette; half-baths are shared with one other resident. As in the Morgan-Allen House, all other rooms are communal.

*For a tour of either residence or to request more information, contact LifePath at 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259 or [info@LifePathMA.org](mailto:info@LifePathMA.org). Read more at [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org).*

## INFORMATION & CAREGIVER RESOURCE CORNER

### Remember to take care of yourself first during times of stress

By Laurie Deskavich, Information & Caregiver Resource Center Program Director, LifePath

As the holidays approach, so does stress, which can cause physical and emotional health issues. Taking care of you is very important.

**Q:** So what should I know about self-care?

**A:** First make sure to make time for you. According to Counseling Psychologist Raphaelia Michael, writing for Psych Central, "self-care is any activity that we do deliberately in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health." Self-care activities build us up to better manage all aspects of our daily lives, and they are effective when they are a planned part of our daily and weekly routines.

Eating a healthy diet, staying active and exercising regularly, getting lots of rest, and seeing your doctor regularly can all help to ensure overall good health. Beyond these general habits, you may also find ways to take care of yourself that are more unique to your particular needs and reflect what you enjoy doing.

**Self-care for people with chronic health conditions**

For someone who is experiencing chronic health issues that limit your activities and socialization, LifePath's Healthy Living program could offer ways to manage your health. Workshops cover topics such as managing pain, diabetes, and general chronic diseases; balance and fitness; and healthy eating. These programs will help you maintain good health and stay active. Learn more at [lifepathma.org/events/healthy-living-workshops](http://lifepathma.org/events/healthy-living-workshops).

**Self-care for caregivers**

As a caregiver, it is important to take care of yourself. If you're not well-fueled, you won't have resources in your tank to care for others.



Dino Schnelle participated in a Healthy Living workshop through LifePath. He reports, "The goal-setting and expectations-management tools have been one of the most important things that I learned, and the exercise and diet tools continue to help me reclaim my life."

At times you may feel isolated. It is important to remember you are not alone. You could join a support group in person or online or stay active by becoming a member at your local YMCA. It is important to take a break and spend time with friends.

LifePath's Caregiver Program is available to help and inform you about what types of services are available to you and your loved one. Ask what types of caregiver respite might be available so you can refresh and renew. It is important to reach out for help as no one can do it alone.

**Self-care for mental health**

If you are experiencing feelings of overwhelming stress or anxiety, intense emotional situations or are having difficulty engaging in regular daily activities, LifePath's Elder Mental Health Outreach Team can help with these problems that are impacting your emotional wellbeing. Our team can help make referrals and educate you about possible resources.

Most importantly, communicate to your primary care physician about what you are experiencing as this is key to getting good medical care. Your doctor can also make referrals for respite, in-home care, YMCA-sponsored programs, or counseling along with assessing your overall wellbeing both physically and emotionally.

**Additional self-care resources**

Call the Information and Caregiver Resource Center at LifePath at 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259, or email [info@lifepathma.org](mailto:info@lifepathma.org), for more information or go to [www.nia.nih.gov/health/topics](http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/topics) for additional resources.

Remember, you're not alone; help is out there.

## RSVP: YOU'RE INVITED TO VOLUNTEER

### Holiday helping at home and away

by Pat Sicard, Volunteer Manager, RSVP of the Pioneer Valley

The urge to help less fortunate people surges as the holidays approach. Most nonprofits, particularly those involved in food security, see an unmanageable swell in offers to assist from Thanksgiving through New Year's. Calls from potential volunteers who want to feel good about helping others could triple. Organizations often cannot accommodate those wanting to serve holiday meals, visit seniors who are homebound, and deliver Meals on Wheels for a day or two. Currie Teoh, Volunteer Director for Manna on Main Street, commented, "I really wish I could bottle up this energy and tap into it at those [after holiday] times."

Service organizations depend on volunteers throughout the year, and RSVP of the Pioneer Valley matches volunteers who can make commitments lasting well beyond the holidays. A November 2017 article in The Huffington Post by Eleanor Goldberg stated that "nonprofits really need help when volunteer numbers dry up after New Year's." Shortages occur in December and January when college students are on

**"If you want to make a difference in your community and have a few hours to regularly share your talent and experience, you are needed."**

semester break and retirees hasten to warm weather retreats. Extra volunteers are needed then to answer phones, drive seniors to medical appointments, pack and deliver meals, stock food pantries, help seniors who are homebound to pay bills, lead exercise classes, and more.

We encourage our RSVP volunteers to make ongoing commitments, and for our volunteers who winter away, we will connect you to RSVP programs in that area. But if you only have a bit of time, some ideas for holiday episodic volunteering include gathering a group for a singalong at a local veterans home, offering to serve and eat a meal with residents of a nursing home, or taking a shift to ring the bell for the Salvation Army Red Kettle Drive.

If you want to make a difference in your community and have a few hours to regularly share your talent and experience, you are needed. Contact me, Pat Sicard, volunteer manager, RSVP of the Pioneer Valley, at 413-387-4558 x1 or [psicard@hcg-ma.org](mailto:psicard@hcg-ma.org) today.

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—Alan Coutinho, Volunteer Meals on Wheels Driver

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