

# HFMA Bulletin

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## Gut power

**G**ut power and its multitude of benefits (linked to skin, immunity and cognitive function) will continue to play a significant role in supporting holistic health.

The human body is home to 38 trillion microorganisms that assist in maintaining health and wellbeing. Different areas of the body – skin, digestive tract, mouth – have different communities of microorganisms and their own unique microbiomes. The digestive tract has the highest density of resident microorganisms and is the most well studied.

Each person's gut microbiome is distinct; it begins to establish itself during birth and stabilizes at around the age of three. However, it continues to shift throughout life and can be influenced by various factors; the use of antibiotics; diet; food supplements; and the presence of a pet.

While there's no consensus in what constitutes a healthy gut microbiome, scientists generally agree that having a diversity of gut bacteria is associated with better health. Additionally, studies have begun to unravel the complex role these friendly bacteria (and their by-products) may have on our digestion, immune health, brain health and mood.

As part of their desire for a holistic approach to health, this research has piqued consumer interest in food supplements that target gut microbiome. 2021 market research by FMCG Gurus shows that consumers actively seek probiotic supplements to support specific areas

of health, including digestive, heart, cognitive and skin health.

### What is the difference between prebiotics, probiotics and postbiotics?

Prebiotics are non-digestible ingredients, like inulin and galacto-oligosaccharides (GOS), that selectively stimulate the growth and/or activity of bacteria residing in the gut.

Probiotics are live microorganisms that confer a health benefit when taken in adequate amounts. The benefits of probiotics are dependent on the species and strain. These may have an impact on one or more of the following areas (although currently these are not accepted EFSA health claims): digestive health and comfort; microbiota balance; immune function; nutrient absorption; and vitamin production.

Postbiotics are non-living bacterial products or metabolic by-products from probiotic microorganisms that may have benefits for the host. While research into postbiotics is just unfolding, they have already captured industry interest. Not only is this the result of their potential health benefits, but also their better stability, compared to live probiotics that are typically sensitive to heat, moisture and oxygen.

The global probiotics market is expected to reach \$95.25 billion by 2028 [Grand View Research]. The vast body of research and consumer interest in prebiotics, probiotics and now postbiotics too will ensure gut health, as a VMS category, continues to play an integral role in maintaining holistic health.

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