

# CONNECTIONS

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## Prebiotics and Probiotics: Creating a Healthier You

Reviewed by Taylor Wolfram, MS, RDN, LDN  
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You've probably heard of prebiotics and probiotics, but do you know what they are? Nutrition research has pinpointed specific functional components of foods that may improve health, and prebiotics and probiotics are two such substances.

Although they are available as dietary supplements, it is not necessary to use special pills, potions, cleanses or other concoctions to incorporate prebiotics and probiotics into your diet. These "nutrition boosters" are natural ingredients in everyday food. In fact, Kristi King, MPH, RDN, LD, CNSC, spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, suggests focusing on the food sources first. "They are more readily available for absorption and digestion," she says. While research continues in this area of nutrition—investigating how effective and safe these substances are and how much we need to obtain health benefits—here's what we know now.

### What Are Prebiotics and What Do They Do?

Prebiotics are natural, non-digestible food components that are linked to promoting the growth of helpful bacteria in your gut. Simply said, they're "good" bacteria promoters. That's right, not all bacteria are bad! Prebiotics may improve gastrointestinal health as well as potentially enhance calcium absorption.

### Prebiotics in Your Diet

Prebiotics include fructooligosaccharides, such as inulin and galactooligosaccharides. But rather than focusing on these lengthy words, include more prebiotics in your diet by eating these foods recommended by King: bananas, onions, garlic, leeks, asparagus, artichokes, soybeans and whole wheat foods.



Hello City Employees!

For National Nutrition Month, we have included an article on prebiotics and probiotics as part of a healthy diet, and we wanted to supplement that information with an article from FEI on the importance of walking for a healthier brain, and how to identify the different types of energy we have, and understand when they are being depleted.

Additionally, with the rise in opioid use and abuse, we have also included an article directed for both supervisors and co-workers to help guide interactions with employees who may be struggling with an opioid or other substance in the workplace.

We have also provided resources for any employees or family members who may themselves be struggling with an addiction, and provide information on the safe disposal of prescription medications.

Peace and all Good!



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## What Are Probiotics and What Do They Do?

Probiotics are the “good” bacteria—or live cultures—just like those naturally found in your gut. These active cultures help change or repopulate intestinal bacteria to balance gut flora. This functional component may boost immunity and overall health, especially GI health. For instance, probiotics have been used for management of irritable bowel syndrome symptoms. Some strains of these live cultures may help prevent specific allergy symptoms, reduce symptoms of lactose intolerance and more. However, effects can vary from person to person.

## Probiotics in Your Diet

To obtain more probiotics, King recommends enjoying fermented dairy foods including yogurt, kefir products and aged cheeses, which contain live cultures (for example, bifidobacteria and lactobacilli). Plus, she suggests some non-dairy foods which also have beneficial cultures, including kimchi, sauerkraut, miso, tempeh and cultured non-dairy yogurts.

## What Makes Prebiotics and Probiotics the “Dynamic Duo?”

Ultimately, prebiotics, or “good” bacteria promoters, and probiotics, or “good” bacteria, work together synergistically. In other words, prebiotics are breakfast, lunch and dinner for probiotics, which restores and can improve GI health. Products that combine these together are called synbiotics. On the menu, that means enjoying bananas atop yogurt or stir-frying asparagus with tempeh is a win-win.

The bottom line: At a minimum, prebiotics and probiotics are keys for good gut health. “I think we are at an exciting time in research,” says King. “We’re finding that the gut flora is responsible for more than just digestion.”

Incorporating health-promoting functional foods, such as foods containing prebiotics and probiotics, into the diet aids in creating a healthier you.

For specific advice on obtaining prebiotics and probiotics for your own specific health needs, especially if you have GI issues or a weakened immune system, contact a registered dietitian nutritionist.

Source: Eat Right



# Six Reasons Why Walking Is the Daily Brain Medicine We Really Need

by FEI Workforce Resilience

**fei** workforce  
resilience  
The City's External EAP Provider



- Sometimes science jibes with ancient wisdom on simple but deceptively powerful things. Case in point: walking. A wealth of research bolsters the Zen of putting one foot in front of the other, with stronger science than any supplement marketer or brain trainer could hope for. Walking is potent mood medicine that enhances thinking, sharpens memory and safeguards brain health. Here are six reasons why you should make it a regular part of your day if you're able.
- 1. Walking boosts your mood even when you're not expecting it.** In a recent [study](#), researchers conducted three experiments on hundreds of college students to find out if they'd experience a positive mood boost while walking, without knowing that walking could be the reason. The researchers disguised each experiment as an alleged test of something else, all the while tracking mood changes linked to the simple act of taking a stroll. They found that just 12 minutes of walking resulted in an increase in joviality, vigor, attentiveness and self-confidence versus the same time spent sitting.
  - 2. Walking enhances creativity, especially when you're seeking a solution.** A Stanford study found that walking increased creative inspiration by an average of 60% versus sitting. The effect was evident while and shortly after walking anywhere between five and 16 minutes. The enhancement was specific to a flavor of creativity called "divergent thinking," defined as a thought process used to generate creative ideas by exploring many possible solutions.
  - 3. Walking sparks connections between brain cells.** Never underestimate the power of walking when it comes to sparking communication between neurons and improving brain health. Such were the results of a study on older adults that included walking along with other forms of exercise, finding that: "One year of walking increased functional connectivity between aspects of the frontal, posterior, and temporal cortices within the Default Mode Network and a Frontal Executive Network, two brain networks central to brain dysfunction in aging."
  - 4. Walking improves working memory.** If you want to sharpen your recall, lace up and hit the sidewalk. A German [study](#) found that performance on challenging working memory tasks improved for participants allowed to walk at their own steady pace, as opposed to a slower pace set by the researchers. The results were more pronounced for the youngest of the study participants, but everyone's working memory improved enough to give walking yet another smiley face.
  - 5. Walking yields the right rhythm for thinking.** One of the more intriguing areas of walking research delves into effects of its steady rhythm on how we think. Studies have examined everything from the [brain-spinal-cord connection](#) with respect to this rhythm to the interplay of [neurological function](#), [biomechanics](#) and [the forces of gravity](#). The bottom line here is still equal parts science and intuition, but all signs point to walking inducing the right rhythm for getting thinking done.
  - 6. Walking is a powerful way to mainline nature.** As I've written about [here before](#), regularly spending time outside is a brain elixir like few others. And when you pair walking with your nature boost it's a win-win, not to mention it's a pleasant way to break up the tyranny of sitting. If you don't have scenic horizons waiting outside your door, no worries—any outside time featuring a steady pace and a little green will work.

Source: Forbes/2016

*If you have ideas for future articles you would like to see in Connections, please email [samos@cityofmadison.com](mailto:samos@cityofmadison.com).*

# LEADERSHIP *Matters*

## Talking About Alcohol and Drugs in the Workplace

### What Employers Can Do

Alcoholism and other drug addictions are chronic and potentially fatal diseases if not treated. Employers who notice an employee having difficulty on the job may want to assess whether alcohol or drug use is affecting this person's productivity. If this is the case, here are some steps you can take to begin a discussion about alcohol and drugs in the workplace.

- **Educate:** Educate employees about company policies regarding alcohol and drug use.
- **Document:** Keep a record of the employee's work performance—good and bad. That way you will be able to document any change.
- **Warn:** Have an informal talk to alert the employee about his or her unsatisfactory job performance, communicate your expectations and discuss the consequences. Do not discuss drug and alcohol abuse specifically. Keep the conversation on job performance issues.
- **Refer:** Contact the person designated by your company—whether it's a representative of your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), a medical professional or other—to advise you about confronting an employee who has problems. They can give you advice for your initial discussion and then inform the employee of available help.
- **Intervene:** Don't delay or beat around the bush. The sooner you talk to an employee, the sooner he or she can get help.
- **Confirm:** Evaluate the extent of any problem through professional assessment.
- **Follow up:** Stick to your guns. Once you have confronted an employee, following through with appropriate support is extremely important.

### What Co-Workers Can Do

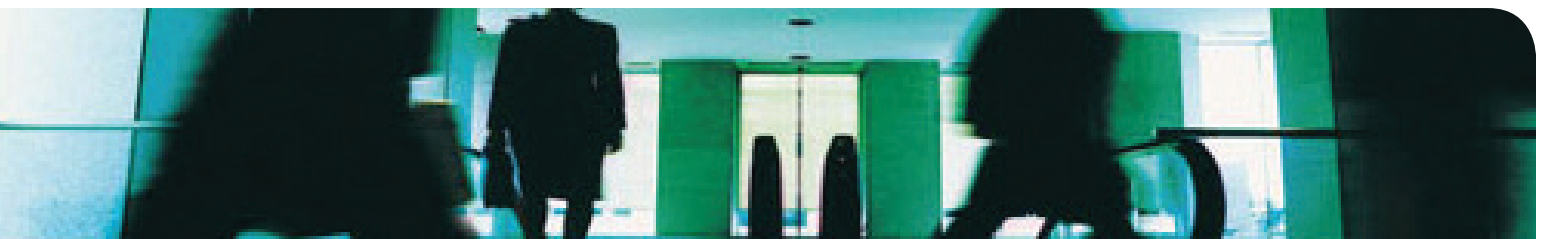
Alcoholism and drug dependency are treatable chronic diseases that know no hierarchy. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 20 million Americans, or 11.3 percent of the population, are affected.

When a colleague shows signs of abusing alcohol or drugs, it can be difficult to know what to do or say. But, if a co-worker's alcohol or drug use affects either your work or his/her health, it's important you try to help. In fact, this may be the time your colleague needs you most.

Following are some suggestions developed by Hazelden counselors to help you broach the subject with your colleague.

- Make use of company resources to help you assist your co-worker, especially if he or she resists your efforts. Denial is a common reaction among those who are dependent on alcohol or drugs.
- Wait to talk to your colleague when he or she is sober and clearheaded.
- Consider writing down what you want to say and practice how you'd answer a variety of responses from your colleague. This will make your discussion easier.
- Express your concern in an honest and caring way. Be sure to use "I" phrases such as "I'm worried." This way, your colleague can't argue with your feelings.
- Talk to your co-worker about the effect of alcohol or drugs on whatever he or she cares about most: career, family, etc. Even if your co-worker doesn't care for himself, he may get help for the sake of his family.
- Don't blame or criticize your colleague for his or her behavior. Addiction is a medically proven disease and often causes individuals to act in ways that are not normal for them.

Source: Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation  
[www.hazeldenbettyford.org](http://www.hazeldenbettyford.org)



## For information about proper disposal of medications

### How & Where to Dispose of Unwanted Prescription Painkillers and Other Drugs, Dose of Reality

#### MedDrop, Safe Communities

#### BE A SAFE AND RESPONSIBLE CONSUMER OF PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS:

- 1 Talk to your doctor
- 2 Talk to your pharmacist
- 3 Use medications as directed
- 4 Avoid sharing medications
- 5 Dispose of medications properly



Presented by  
GenerationRx

GenerationRxWorkplace.com

## Signs of Substance Abuse Disorder

Be mindful of changes in the following areas, which may signal a substance use disorder in an employee:

- Attendance concerns
- Unusual behavior
- Triggering events
- Changes in work patterns
- Mood
- Accidents
- Relationship to others on the job
- Physical signs or conditions

For more information regarding substance use or intoxication on the job, please see the **symptoms checklist** provided by HR. In addition, City HR offers **Alcohol and Drug Testing Training** to supervisors and managers on the specifics of APM 2-23 Drug Free Workplace and Testing Policy.

## 4 Secrets to All-Day Energy

by Terri Trespicio, meQuilibrium

Why can we never get enough done in a day? It's not because we're inefficient or bad at what we do. In fact, it's less about time management—and more about energy management. Let us explain.

You don't need to force yourself to jam more in. The key is to respect and cultivate better energy so that you can optimize the hours you do have. According to performance experts Tony Schwartz and Jim Loehr in their book, *The Power of Full Engagement*, there are four kinds of energy: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. We rely on a mix of each energy source to get us through the day. The goal is to support and maintain a steady, healthy flow of energy—without forcing it beyond its limits.

Here are Schwartz and Loehr's key principles for managing your energy more skillfully on and off the job:

### Physical Energy

- **Warning signs:** You feel groggy, sleepy, heavy, or even weak.
- **How to boost it:** The less you move and engage your body physically, the less energy you will have—no matter how much coffee you fill it with. While the last thing you probably feel like doing when you feel physically tired is get moving, it's the one thing that will get you over this hurdle.
- Experiment with exercising at different times of day: Some people can't start their day without it, and others love to use it to shake off stress in the evening. Find your sweet spot, and aim to get up out of your chair at some point during the workday and take a brisk walk to keep energy moving.

### Mental Energy

- **Warning signs:** You're unable to think straight, focus, or problem solve. Sometimes, you're lucky if you can say your own name.
- **How to boost it:** Shift tasks. You can expect 90 minutes to about 2 hours of focus before your attention starts to split and snag on anything that pops up. If you've been doing some monotonous work for a few hours, turn your attention to some more complex problems that require creative solutions—say, a tricky customer service issue.
- Or the opposite: If you've been dealing with very heady issues for hours, switch tasks and handle the mail, email, or some basic chore to break up your day.
- Pay attention to your inner rhythm and you can time your projects and tasks to match your energy levels throughout the day. If you're a morning person, tackle anything more intensive, complicated, or that requires writing in the morning—and leave emails and smaller tasks for the 3 PM slump. Or, if you're a night owl, make mornings less challenging by prepping at night when you're still alert and awake.



## Spiritual Energy

- **Warning signs:** Depressed, aloof, feeling detached, aimless, bored. You may start to feel like your efforts don't matter or experience a loss of purpose.
- **How to boost it:** Spiritual energy isn't necessarily about religion. It's about feeling like your life has meaning and purpose. So, take a step back and give yourself a chance to identify the source of this feeling. What's happened recently to make you think this way? Are you feeling uninspired at work? In need of a new creative outlet? Disconnected from your community? Healing spiritual energy requires self-directed compassion and trust. Of course you (and your work) have purpose—losing sight of it doesn't mean it's gone or never existed.
- First, take steps to rekindle connection with people around you. Think about how what you do—be it at work, at home, or out in your community—affects the people you see, and even the people you don't see. As meQuilibrium's Chief Science Officer Dr. Andrew Shatté says, feeling this connection to others is critical for attaining the highest level of happiness.
- Then, look upward—choose a new source of inspiration and expose yourself to new ideas. Pick up a new book, sign up for an art class, volunteer at your local community garden or animal shelter. Doing the same thing over and over can't lift you out of this rut; you need to allow yourself to be lifted by the words and wisdom of others.
- And when you start seeing your life in this way, you'll find that your well of energy hasn't run dry; you merely had to tap it again.

Source: meQuilibrium

## Emotional Energy

- **Warning signs:** Nervousness, anxiety, prone to distraction, reactive, short-tempered, even weepy. An upsetting call or difficult conversation can take a whopping toll on your ability to stay focused or solve problems.
- **How to boost it:** Ignoring it won't help, but you also can't afford to be emotionally derailed all day while you cope with an issue. Instead, give yourself safe, sacred time to address the source of emotional stress.
- This may mean different things to different people. While your friend may prefer to bang a couple miles out around the track, you may be better served by taking 15 minutes to yourself to breathe, listen to music, or call a good friend. Never underestimate the powerful, healing effects of sleep, either. Without enough, you'll be more vulnerable to stress. During times of low emotional energy, you need more rest, not less.

*Thanks for reading,  
we hope you found the information useful!*

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