***Fermented food***

Fermented foods have been consumed for thousands of years and there has been a lot of popularity recently surrounding potential health benefits.

Evidence shows that our gut health is important and eating a variety of foods will help support this leading to a diverse microflora (the name given to the species that live in our gut). Fermented foods can be included in this however it is important to remember a few things: firstly, if fermenting your own foods, it is essential that you do your research to ensure good hygiene and proper growing conditions. If foods are not fermented under controlled conditions harmful bacteria could be grown, and at home there is no way to tell what you have grown!

Secondly the evidence for using fermented foods to treat conditions such as IBS and constipation is lacking with more human studies needed. The strongest evidence exists for yogurt, which also provides a source of protein and calcium – important for supporting bone health. Although some studies are emerging, at present they are of poor quality or do not have findings to show a benefit to health from eating fermented food.

Finally remember that some of the fermented foods we eat have been processed so there are no microbes present such as pasteurised, baked or cooked products, meaning there is a difference between fermented food and probiotics which actually contain live bacteria.