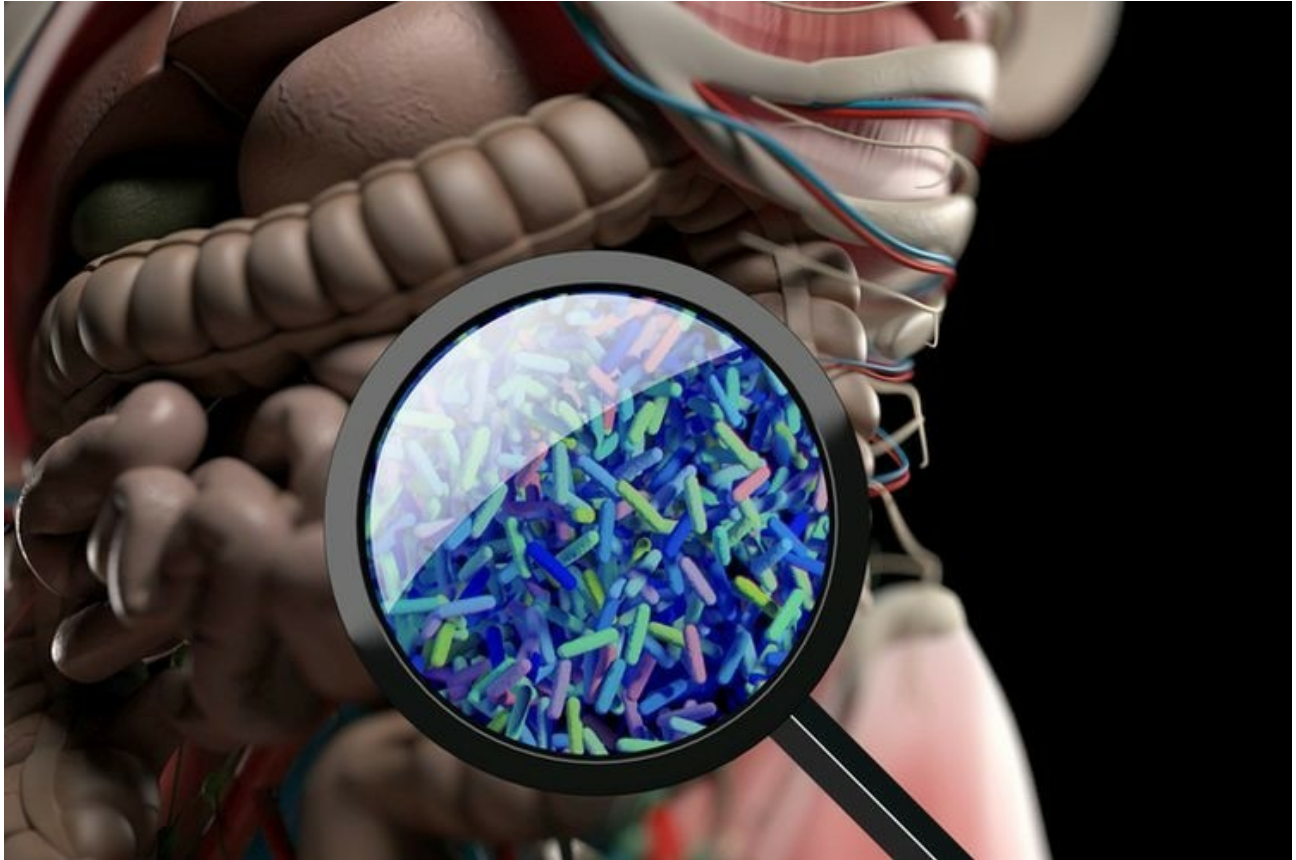


Beneo: 'Prebiotics open a whole new door to the world of gut health that hasn't been well explored in the US'

[foodnavigator-usa.com/Article/2018/04/20/Beneo-Prebiotics-open-a-whole-new-door-to-the-world-of-gut-health-that-hasn-t-been-well-explored-in-the-US](https://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/Article/2018/04/20/Beneo-Prebiotics-open-a-whole-new-door-to-the-world-of-gut-health-that-hasn-t-been-well-explored-in-the-US)



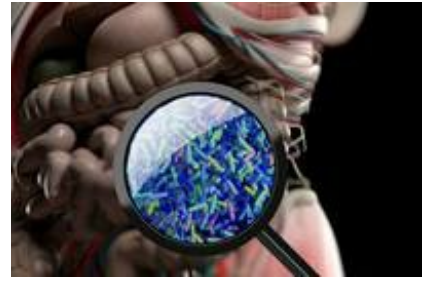
Speaking to FoodNavigator-USA for our digestive health special edition, Denisse Colindres, manager, nutrition communication for Beneo (a leading supplier of chicory root fiber) in North America, acknowledged that fiber lacks the sex appeal of protein in food marketing right now, despite the fact that most Americans are short of the former and not the latter.

However, talking about how fibers such as inulin and oligofructose can confer **prebiotic*** effects by promoting the growth of beneficial bacteria in the gut, is providing brands with a new way to talk about established ingredients, said Colindres.

“They are looking for what is new, what new things can I talk about, and prebiotics open a whole new door to the world of gut health that hasn’t been well explored in the US. And while consumers are still learning about it, our research shows that the word 'prebiotic' does resonate with consumers and is associated with gut health [even if they don’t know exactly what it means]. People also like the idea that prebiotics support the natural gut bacteria that already exists in your gut as well as helping with regularity.

“The good thing is that our prebiotic fibers also confer all of these other benefits as well such as weight management, calcium absorption and blood glucose control.”

The definition of prebiotic recently agreed by the International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP) is: “A substrate that is selectively utilized by host microorganisms conferring a health benefit.”



[Click HERE to read more.](#)

There are 25 human clinical trials on chicory root fiber that demonstrate a prebiotic effect

She added: “Beneo has been a pioneer in researching chicory root fibers and we were recently recognized by the ISAAP (International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics) as a scientifically proven prebiotic.

“There are more than 25 human clinical trials on chicory root fiber that demonstrate a prebiotic effect [to date, chicory root fiber – which reaches the colon intact and is selectively fermented, increasing stool volume and softness - is the only prebiotic to secure a health claim in the EU, although the wording needs work if marketers want to take advantage: ‘Chicory inulin contributes to maintenance of normal defecation by increasing stool frequency’].”

“A recent study ([Vandeputte et al. 2017](#)) from the University of Leuven in Belgium published in [the peer-reviewed journal] *Gut* using next-generation sequencing, looked into the whole gut microbe ecosystem and found that inulin was able to increase the good bacteria *Bifidobacterium* and *Anaerostipes* and decrease the pathogen known as *Bilophila*,” said Colindres.

Bifidobacteria are known to produce Vitamin B and other metabolites, while *Anaerostipes* is associated with the production of the short chain fatty acid butyrate, which supports the lining of the gut, she explained. *Bilophila*, by contrast, is a known pathogen linked to increased gas production.

“A direct link was also found between the consumption of inulin, a decrease in *Bilophila* and softer stools and an improved wellbeing in mildly constipated subjects.”

Several other recent studies also point to digestive health benefits from consumption of Beneo’s chicory root fiber, including [Buddington et al. 2017](#), which showed that a daily intake of Beneo’s oligofructose improved bowel regularity without causing GI discomfort in subjects with low fiber intake; [Micka et al 2017](#), which showed improved stool frequency in mildly constipated subjects through regular consumption of Beneo’s inulin; and [Azpiroz et al 2017](#), which showed that the consumption of 8g/day of Beneo’s inulin was well-tolerated and reduced gas retention in sensitive subjects with IBS, as well as increasing Bifidobacteria in the gut, she added.

Chicory root fibers are soluble, prebiotic, fermentable dietary fibers that survive until they reach the large intestine (the colon), where they are selectively fermented by beneficial bacteria, notably Bifidobacteria, which are stimulated to multiply, says Beneo.



Feeling and hearing your gut working is not a bad thing

While higher doses of inulin are sometimes claimed to cause digestive discomfort in some people, the above studies showed that it was well tolerated, claimed Colindres. *“The Azpiroz study showed that inulin actually reduced gas retention, and these were very sensitive subjects. But in general, sensitivity varies from person to person, but as a general rule, if you are going to add fiber to your diet it’s a good idea to do it gradually.”*

That said, ‘feeling’ and ‘hearing’ your gut is not actually such a bad thing, she pointed out.

“There is a lack of dietary fiber intake in the American diet and that probably means that a lot of people’s guts are silent, which doesn’t mean they are healthy. Feeling your gut working is not a bad thing.”

Does the FDA classify chicory root as a dietary fiber?

Inulin and oligofructose (a shorter chain functional fiber produced via the enzymatic hydrolysis of inulin) can both be listed as chicory root fiber on food ingredient labels in the US, said Colindres.

And while manufacturers are still waiting to see whether the FDA will classify them as dietary fibers (so they can count as grams of fiber on the new-look Nutrition Facts panel) Beneo is extremely confident that a petition it put together with rivals Cosucra and Sensus will be viewed favorably by regulators given the large body of clinical evidence supporting chicory root fiber’s health benefits, she added.

As you can add chicory root fibers to almost anything from gummies, ice cream and infant formula to bread, yogurt, cereals and cereal bars without compromising taste or mouth feel, (inulin is often referred to as the ‘invisible’ fiber), consumers don’t have to compromise on taste or texture in order to get fiber into their diets, she claimed.

*The slightly broader definition of 'prebiotic' recently agreed by the International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP) is: *“a substrate that is selectively utilized by host microorganisms conferring a health benefit.”* [**Click HERE.**](#)

How are US consumers thinking about digestive health?

For some consumers, digestive health is about avoiding foods that make them feel bloated or lethargic, for some, it's about 'roughage' and 'regularity,' while for others it's about keeping their guts happy with prebiotics and probiotics, says Hartman Group.

