**W1 – Sweet Tooth Decay**  
*Category: Bacteria*  
*Species: Streptococcus mutans*  
Minutes after brushing your teeth, bacteria called *Streptococcus mutans* attach themselves to crevices in your teeth. They create a sticky, protective layer called plaque, which protects them from saliva. These bacteria consume sugars and produce an acid that eats away at your tooth’s enamel. So if you snack on too many sweets between meals, you are literally feeding the bacteria that cause cavities.

**W2 – Flu Fighters**  
*Category: Bacteria*  
*Species: Many*  
When you get the flu, your respiratory system and digestive tract are compromised. Luckily, helpful bacteria inside you leave a trail of proteins that tell immune-system cells like T-cells about the invaders.

When this happens in your lungs, T-cells travel through smaller and smaller blood vessels until they reach tiny air sacs called alveoli. There, the T-cells search for the virus affecting you, and then initiate the process that helps your body begin to heal.

**W3 – The Stomach Suits It**  
*Category: Bacteria*  
*Species: Helicobacter pylori*  
The stomach is a highly acidic environment. *H. pylori* are one of the very few bacteria that can thrive there. These bacteria, which affect 20-50% of the population in developed countries, are both a boon and a bother to humans.

They help us regulate our immune system, prevent allergies and control our appetite. They also reduce the risk of some esophagus diseases.

However, they can also cause ulcers and stomach cancer. Therefore, some scientists think we should introduce the bacteria to children, and then remove them from adults.
**W4 – No Kidney Stone Left Alone**  
*Category: Bacteria*  
*Species: Oxalobacter formigenes*  
Some people suffer from kidney stones—mineral deposits that include calcium. But a gut bacterium can keep these stones from forming because it feeds on the calcium crystals.

Unfortunately, in America this beneficial bacterium is found in only 15% of adults, and is almost absent in children. The chief cause of their disappearance is antibiotics—and penicillin in particular. The good news is that this bacterium could potentially be introduced as a probiotic to people who suffer from kidney stones.

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**W5 – Converting Carbs**  
*Category: Bacteria*  
*Species: Various Bacteroides thetaiotaomicron and various Firmicutes*  
Many bacteria in the gut are able to consume carbohydrates that we can't. The bacteria change carbohydrates into fatty acids that nourish the lining of our intestines and provide a sugar-free energy source.

This partnership benefits both parties. We get nutrients we normally wouldn't, as well as a healthier gut. And the bacteria have a place to call home. Additional bacteria in our gut give us other essential nutrients that we can’t create ourselves, such as Vitamin K and Vitamin B12.

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**W6 – The Colon’s Beneficial Bacteria**  
*Category: Bacteria*  
*Species: Types of Bacteriodes, Bifidobacteria, Eubacteria and others*  
The communal bacteria in our colon help us in two major ways. One way is by producing tiny packets of energy for our body. They do this by fermenting complex carbohydrates like the fiber found in broccoli.

But these bacteria also protect us from pathogens. They crowd out disease-causing bacteria. And kill food-borne bacteria like *Salmonella* species by making the colon more acidic.