Synbiotics were originally proposed in 1995 to refer to a combination of a probiotic and a prebiotic. In 2019, a group of scientists met to discuss specifics of this class of substances and to propose a new definition.

**Synbiotics may be formulated using two approaches:**

**Complementary Synbiotic**
- Mixture of probiotic(s) + prebiotic(s). Each works independently to achieve one or more health benefits.
- The probiotic and prebiotic components of a complementary synbiotic must meet the minimum criteria of these substances. The probiotic must have a demonstrated health benefit at the dose in the synbiotic mixture. The prebiotic criteria must have a demonstrated health benefit in the same study showing selective utilization by the host microbiota, at the dose in the synbiotic mixture. Demonstration of a health benefit of the synbiotic mixture in the target host is further required, but demonstration of selective utilization of the substrate in the synbiotic mixture is not required.

**Synergistic Synbiotic**
- Mixture of a selectively utilized substrate and a live microbe chosen for its ability to deliver a health effect. Components comprising synergistic synbiotics work together to bring about resulting health benefit(s).
- For a synergistic synbiotic, demonstration of a health benefit and selective utilization of the substrate by the co-administered live microbe in the target host must be shown in the same study.

A synbiotic may target the gut or non-gut microbial ecosystems in the body and may be formulated into products fitting an array of regulatory categories (such as foods, non-foods, cosmetics, drugs, or nutritional supplements).