

Probiotics

Healthy bacteria help make healthy people

Probiotics are live beneficial bacteria. The word probiotic means “for life.” We need probiotics to live. We have 100,000 billion bacteria living in our gastrointestinal tract, that’s more bacteria than we have cells in our body. Many of these are healthy bacteria, but some are not. It is important to make sure we keep plenty of good bacteria in our GI tract. For infants and children, Bifidobacterium and Lactobacillus are most important.

Healthy bacterial serve many important functions:

- Prevent overgrowth of bad bacteria
- Help heal our GI tract after damage has been done
- Make vitamins
- Produce energy
- Stimulate our immune systems
- Metabolize food
- Lower cholesterol

Healthy bacteria are the “**live active cultures**” like those found in yogurt. This is why people on antibiotics are often advised to eat yogurt to avoid a yeast infection.

So why not just eat more yogurt? First, many times those “live” cultures in yogurt aren’t still alive when you eat them. Sometimes, the bacteria in the probiotic supplements aren’t alive either, which is why we recommend specific reliable brands. Furthermore, probiotics contain more than ten times the amount of bacteria than 1 yogurt. Consequently, your chances of benefiting from a probiotic is much better than just eating yogurt.

What signs/symptoms suggest that you or your child could benefit from taking probiotics?

- Gas, bloating, burping
- Taking, or have recently taken, an antibiotic
- Recurrent colds or infections
- Eczema, asthma, allergies, psoriasis
- Diarrhea, caused by a virus, bacteria, or due to an antibiotic
- Constipation
- Lactose intolerance
- Sugar cravings
- Irritable bowel and inflammatory bowel
- Gastric ulcer prevention and colon cancer prevention
- Any chronic inflammatory condition, such as arthritis, lupus, and MS
- ADD/ADHD/ Depression/ Autism
- To **boost your immune system** and better fight off colds and the flu

Probiotics are extremely safe.

The only documented cases of related illness were in severely immunocompromised patients with prolonged hospitalization and after surgery.

Tips to taking probiotics:

- 1 The best time to take probiotics often depends on the probiotic.** On the whole, take the probiotic and don't worry about timing. However some probiotics get killed in the stomach if the environment is too acidic. Thus, either taking the probiotic with food or on a completely empty stomach (just before bed) will be the best way to ensure it's viability.
- 2 If you are taking antibiotics or another supplements to kill bacteria, ideally take the probiotics at least 15-30 minutes before or after, so the antimicrobial and probiotic are not in the stomach at the same time.**
- 3 Keep probiotics refrigerated for longest shelf-life.** They are living and most will live longer if kept in a cool, dry place. Some brands are more stable and do not require refrigeration. When in doubt, refrigerate.
- 4 How to give probiotics if you can't swallow pills?** Open the capsule and put in a spoonful of applesauce or yogurt. Never add them to hot foods or cook them, as the heat will kill the organisms.

Ideally these bacteria will be happy in your body, and make a home there and reproduce. However, sometimes they don't and continued supplementation is necessary.

Sometimes one probiotic may not be as helpful as another strain. Each person's gut bacteria is as different as their fingerprint, and some trial and error may be necessary.

Pre-biotics or fructooligosaccharides, feed the healthy bacteria. Breast milk is also full of pre-biotics. Many probiotic supplements contain pre-biotics.

A poor diet, excessive alcohol, drugs, including antibiotics, and stress can also throw off the balance of beneficial bacteria.

So, in addition to probiotics, take good care of your body! Eat lots of vegetables, fruits, and whole foods. Avoid sugar, get at least 15 minutes of sun exposure daily (without sunscreen but without getting burned) or take vitamin D3. Drink plenty of water, exercise, and get at least 8 hours of sleep each night.

Disclaimer: Some products mentioned have not been evaluated by the FDA. They are intended to benefit normal structure and function and are not intended to cure, treat, or prevent any disease.