

probiotics

What are Probiotics?

Probiotics are healthy bacteria that naturally live in your body. These helpful bacteria are especially important for your digestive system. Good bacteria can help support your immune system and reduce inflammation. They work to keep your body, particularly your gut, healthy. Probiotics are part of a larger community of bacteria that live in and on your body to help keep you healthy. This collection of organisms, or microbes, is called your microbiome. You have trillions of microbes that make up your microbiome. Each person's microbiome is unique and varies based on a person's diet, medications, age, lifestyle, environmental factors, health problems and how they were born.

Probiotics are available in a variety of foods and drinks, as well as probiotic supplements. **Look for these types of common probiotics on package labeling:**

- *Lactobacillus*
- *Bifidobacterium*
- *Saccharomyces boulardii*

Probiotics can support health in different ways:

- Help your immune system function properly
- Aid digestion by breaking down foods we can't digest
- Keep harmful microorganisms in check
- Produce vitamins and aid in nutrient absorption

Probiotics have the potential to:

- Help reduce antibiotic-associated diarrhea
- Help manage digestive discomforts
- Help with the digestion of lactose
- Help manage infectious diarrhea
- Help manage vaginal infections

Sources of Probiotics Include:

- **Fermented Dairy Products (Yogurt, Kefir, Buttermilk):** Look for added probiotics listed on the label.
- **Supplements:** These can be convenient for travel and may have a higher potency than probiotics found in foods .
- **Other Fermented Foods (Kimchi, Tempeh, Miso, Kombucha, Sourdough Bread, Pickles, Sauerkraut):** These can be sources of live bacteria if not heat-treated .

Choosing a Probiotic

- Match the strain to benefit you want, not all strains are the same.
- Amounts matter. Be sure the product contains the level of probiotics needed for the health benefit.
- Safety first! Probiotics are safe for most people, but talk to your doctor if you suffer from an immune disorder or have a serious underlying condition before taking a probiotic supplement.

If you need help determining what type of probiotic may be best for you, check out the U.S. Probiotic Guide at: www.usprobioticguide.com