

The Power of Probiotics



Probiotics have become all the rage over the past several years, though many don't have a true understanding of what they are or their health benefits. Long before probiotics were a trendy supplement, these powerful microorganisms were living in our bodies naturally as good bacteria.

Many experts believe that the combination of today's unhealthy diets (high in processed foods, low in nutrients) and increasingly stressful lifestyles has caused an increase in many health conditions that have been linked to problems with gut health. While there's no substitute for a healthy lifestyle, probiotics have become an increasingly popular way to help improve overall health and wellness. Whether you get your probiotics naturally from food or you choose to supplement, knowing all you can about them can help you take better control of your health and overall well-being.

Bacteria in Your Body – A Balancing Act

Most of the bacteria in our bodies reside in our gut, an area of the body that contributes significantly to our overall health. While the term "bacteria" has gotten a bad rap, the truth is, our bodies need bacteria to function. Most of the bacteria in our bodies (nearly 85%) are actually good and they perform a number of critical functions, including food digestion and important immune system functions, to name a few.

In our bodies, a balance of both good bacteria (probiotics) and bad bacteria (pathogenics) reside peacefully when all is going well. It's when we suffer from an imbalance between the "good" and "bad" bacteria that we start experiencing uncomfortable symptoms or illnesses. So, how do you ensure you consistently have a healthy amount of good bacteria in your body? Understanding and achieving this important balance can help you improve your overall health and wellness.

How Do Probiotics Work?

Researchers have been exploring the benefits of probiotics and their inner workings since the early 20th century. Even still, most experts don't know for certain *how* they work – and there hasn't been conclusive data that specifies how to dose or administer them as a supplement. Still, millions of people experience relief from uncomfortable symptoms or health problems with the help of probiotics.

While researchers are still exploring which types of probiotics are best for specific health problems, some common conditions treated with the use of these good bacteria include:

- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)
- Infectious diarrhea (caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites)
- Diarrhea caused by antibiotics

- Skin conditions
- Urinary and vaginal health
- Allergy and cold prevention
- Oral health

Feel the Change

Probiotics have been linked to numerous health improvements, but the following are among the most common reasons to be sure your diet includes enough of these beneficial bacteria.

Improve Your Digestive Health

One of the most common and most documented uses for probiotics is to improve digestive problems. Some of the most commonly treated conditions include colic, constipation, inflammatory bowel disease, irritable bowel syndrome, lactose intolerance, and ulcerative colitis, to name a few.

Support a Healthy Weight

Certain families of probiotic bacteria have been known to reduce belly fat, while others help prevent the absorption of fat. Other varieties have been associated with benefits such as improving metabolism, reducing fat accumulation in the body, and boosting satiety (a feeling of fullness). However, everyone is different, so the effects of probiotic bacteria depend on your individual needs and overall health – and some bacteria have shown mixed results when it comes to weight loss, so it's important to consult with your doctor or do your homework before adding them to your diet for weight loss.

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Relieve Inflammation

For those suffering from inflammatory conditions such as ulcerative colitis, chronic fatigue syndrome, psoriasis or certain types of arthritis, probiotics just might help you reduce the inflammation throughout your body – ultimately (in theory) reducing your symptoms. A 2014 study published in the journal *Nutrition* revealed that patients suffering from rheumatoid arthritis who took a probiotic for 8 weeks had significant changes in several biomarkers of inflammation.

6 Probiotic Foods for a Healthy Start

Probiotic foods are a great, natural way to get the good bacteria you need to achieve a healthy balance. If you're looking to increase your consumption of probiotics, below are 6 foods you may want to add to your diet.



Yogurt

Yogurt is one of the best sources of probiotics – just be sure to choose a yogurt with live cultures and keep in mind that many processed yogurts are high in sugar. If you prefer, you can easily make your own and get creative with different milks, toppings, mixers, etc.



Kefir

Kefir is a fermented probiotic milk drink that has been linked to various health benefits and is one of the best sources of probiotics you can find. Another added bonus is that kefir is generally well-tolerated by people who are lactose intolerant.



Sauerkraut

Sauerkraut consists of finely shredded cabbage that has been fermented by lactic acid bacteria. Just don't forget to choose unpasteurized sauerkraut, as pasteurization kills the live and active bacteria. You can find raw sauerkraut at your local health food store or online.



Kimchi

Kimchi – a fermented, spicy

Korean side dish with cabbage – contains the lactic acid bacteria *Lactobacillus kimchi*, as well as other lactic acid bacteria that improve digestive health. Kimchi is high in some vitamins and minerals, including vitamin K, riboflavin (vitamin B2), and iron.



Kombucha

Kombucha, a fermented black or green tea drink, is fermented with bacteria and yeast and offers a great source of probiotics. Just be sure to watch out for the sugar content and try to find one with under 5 grams of sugar per serving.



Pickles

Pickles (cucumbers that have been pickled in salt, spices, and water) are a great source of healthy probiotic bacteria. They are low in calories and offer a good source of vitamin K. Be sure to skip the vinegar though which kills live probiotics.



The Scoop on Supplements

If you don't care for or can't tolerate these probiotic-rich foods and you want to improve your balance of good bacteria, it may be time to consider a supplement. Beyond Diet recommends Spring of Life Premium Probiotic – it provides a great source of natural and organic ingredients for improved energy and nutrition.

[Get Spring of Life Premium Probiotic here »](#)

If you choose to supplement, select a probiotic that offers a diverse strain of bacteria. Also, the higher colony forming unit (CFU), the more good bacteria you'll find in the supplement. Ideally, it's best to start with a small dose and increase over time, and experts recommend you ultimately maintain with a probiotic that includes 50+

billion CFUs or more. Once you start, pay attention to your body and note if you experience any changes in how you feel – either good or bad. This is important since there are many strains of probiotics and it may take some trial and error to find the best kind for your body. Finally, for best results, experts recommend taking probiotics on an empty stomach whenever possible.

Healthy Benefits from the Inside Out

Ensuring proper bacteria balance can benefit weight, digestion, immune function, skin health, and many other areas of your body. If you're interested in improving your gut health, consider either incorporating probiotic foods or a dietary supplement into your everyday routine. Regardless of

the source, probiotics can have powerful effects on your overall well-being.

Sources

[A meta-analysis of probiotic efficacy for gastrointestinal diseases.](#) (*Public Library of Science*)

[Probiotics 101](#) (*Healthline*)

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[What are Probiotics?](#) (*WebMD*)

[Your Digestive System](#) (*WebMD*)