

What are Probiotics?

Probiotics are “good” bacteria or yeast that support our health. Many of these organisms are part of a healthy digestive system (microbiome). Probiotics can be found in fermented foods like yogurt, sauerkraut, kombucha, and as supplements.



WHY TAKE PROBIOTICS?

There are many reasons why people take probiotics. Some reasons are backed by science. Others are just claims at this time. We still have a lot to learn.

Here are some reasons shown by science to take certain probiotics:

- ❑ To prevent diarrhea from antibiotics or infections
- ❑ For irritable bowel syndrome: to help with abdominal pain and bloating
- ❑ To prevent or treat eczema
- ❑ To prevent the common cold and flu, and lessen symptoms

HOW DO PROBIOTICS WORK?

We think that probiotics may work by crowding out “bad” bacteria, yeasts and parasites in our bodies with “good” bacteria and yeasts. Or probiotics may encourage our immune systems to be alert for threats.

ARE PROBIOTICS SAFE?

For healthy people, taking probiotics is safe. However, some people with very weak immune systems could get seriously ill. Supplements are not monitored by the FDA. This means quality is unknown, and the claims on the bottle are often not backed by research. Talk to your healthcare professional about which type of probiotic might be best for you.



HOW MUCH SHOULD I TAKE?

There is still so much to learn about probiotics, like which to take for certain conditions, and at what dose. Some general probiotic tips:

- ❑ Many foods are naturally probiotic. While these foods are part of a healthy diet, they may not have enough dose in a serving to help with a given condition. That may be the time to consider a supplement.
- ❑ Try: cultured yogurts, kefir, fermented pickles and sauerkraut, kimchi, kombucha, and other fermented foods.
- ❑ If going with a supplement, be sure to do your research about which strain is best for your condition.
- ❑ A dose of at least 5-10 billion CFU (Colony Forming Units) per day is usually required to see results.
- ❑ Make sure you check to see if the probiotic you buy needs to be refrigerated. Some high-quality products do need this, but others do not.
- ❑ Store your supplements in a cool, dark, dry place.
- ❑ If taking probiotics to avoid diarrhea from antibiotics, be sure to start within 2–3 days of starting the medication. Keep taking the probiotics for a week after you finish the medication.
- ❑ It is safe for kids to take quality probiotics daily during the cold and flu season. This has been shown to decrease the length of respiratory and intestinal infections.
- ❑ Consider bringing a probiotic on your next trip abroad to avoid traveler’s diarrhea. Start taking it before you arrive, and continue to take it every day.

WHAT ABOUT BRANDS?

There are many brands of probiotics. To find a list of some probiotics rated by quality, safety, and price, go to <https://labdoor.com/rankings/probiotics>

For more information, scan the QR code below, or visit nciph.org/probiotics



