

What are Probiotics?

Probiotics are healthy bacteria that live in your gut.

They are found in yogurt and other fermented foods as well as dietary supplements.

The body, especially the lower gastrointestinal tract (the gut), contains a complex and diverse community of bacteria. We often think of bacteria as harmful germs, yet many bacteria actually help the body function properly.

Probiotics may have a variety of effects in the body.

- Help your body maintain a healthy community of microorganisms.
- Help with constipation or diarrhea.
- Produce substances that have desirable effects such as enzymes for digestion.
- Influence your body's immune response.

Different probiotics contain different bacteria. The most common are Bifidobacterium and Lactobacillus. Other bacteria or yeasts may also be used as probiotics.

Be cautious

- While **probiotics usually have few side effects**, data on long-term safety are limited. Risk of serious side effects may be greater in people who have underlying health conditions.
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration has not approved any health claims for probiotics.
- The effects of probiotic supplements may vary from person to person.
- If you are considering a probiotic dietary supplement, talk with your health care provider.
- Do not replace scientifically proven treatments with unproven products or practices.



QUESTIONS?

Call Beth McKinney, Registered Dietitian

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What are Probiotics?

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These live microorganisms may have health benefits when consumed. They can be found in yogurt and other fermented foods as well as dietary supplements.

The body, especially the lower gastrointestinal tract (the gut), contains a complex and diverse community of bacteria. Although we tend to think of bacteria as harmful “germs,” many bacteria actually help the body function properly.

Probiotics may have a variety of effects in the body.

- Help your body maintain a healthy community of microorganisms.
- Help with constipation or diarrhea.
- Produce substances that have desirable effects.
- Influence your body’s immune response.

Different probiotics contain different bacteria. The most common belong to groups called Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium. Other bacteria may also be used as probiotics as well as many yeasts. Each different bacteria can have different effects on the body.

Be cautious

- Studies suggest that **probiotics usually have few side effects.** However, data on long-term safety are limited, and the risk of serious side effects may be greater in people who have underlying health conditions.
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved any health claims for probiotics.
- The effects of supplementing with probiotics may vary from person to person.
- If you are considering a probiotic dietary supplement, talk with your health care provider first.
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