



# To ProBiotic or Not to ProBiotic

By Orly Bernstein, DHom, CCH,RSHom(NA) and Lawrence Hoberman, M.D.

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We have heard it all before. Eat healthy; you are what you eat; stay on a healthy diet. What does all that really mean? What is so important about eating a healthy balanced diet anyways? First, we should start by asking why we eat.

Food is our fuel. Just like a car needs fuel to run, so do we. Since our body is very complex, the purpose of food in our body varies. We eat to stay alive, and we need nutrients to keep our body healthy and functioning. The quality of our diet has a major impact on our health. Our diet consists of three types of nutrients. Protein is the building block to maintain and replenish our tissues, immune system and vital enzymes. Fats and carbohydrates are our source of energy. Choosing low glycemic carbohydrates, like whole grain breads and brown rice, helps to control our blood sugar. Fresh fruits and vegetables are excellent source of natural antioxidants and healthy carbohydrates. It is best to avoid saturated fat and trans fatty acids which adversely affect our cholesterol values. Adhering to a healthy diet will have the recommended daily allowances of vitamins and minerals. If you want to insure that you are getting enough vitamins and minerals, taking a multiple vitamin and a calcium supplement with vitamin D is reasonable.

Our intestines are the home to about 400 different species of bacteria. Some of the bacteria might promote health by digesting food, producing vitamins, preventing infection and regulating the immune system. Most of the time, the intestinal micro flora are kept in balance. Unfortunately, an unhealthy diet, excess alcohol, and drugs like antibiotics, acid suppressing medications, and NSAIDS (ibuprofen type medications) can tip the balance in favor of the harmful bacteria. Our western diet is high in refined simple sugars and fat. Consuming this type of diet can inhibit the good bacteria and allow the harmful bacteria to proliferate. Antibiotics can cure bacterial infections, but in the process, can also kill the good intestinal bacteria. Taking the proper dose and strains of good probiotics can improve the micro flora imbalance.

Probiotics are cultures of beneficial microorganisms which improve digestion. When ingested, they encourage the growth of beneficial bacteria in the body. Probiotics are supplements that contain the 'friendly' or 'good' bacteria that reside in the intestinal tract. The word "bacteria" has often been associated with a bad infection or an awful bug. Scientists have studied the micro flora or bacteria that populate our intestines and have found that they are very important for the health and function of the intestines. The good bacteria set up housekeeping or colonize the intestines, creating a beneficial barrier against harmful bacteria that we may ingest. They produce substances that inhibit the invasion of harmful bacteria. In addition, the good bacteria interact with the intestinal lining cells to boost our immunity.

Probiotics have been advocated for the prevention and treatment of a wide range of symptoms and diseases. There is strong evidence for their efficacy in some clinical scenarios. Probiotics are now widely used in many countries by consumers and in clinical practice. They can be a beneficial form of therapy without the concern for significant adverse effects and drug interactions associated with prescription and over the counter therapies.



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People of any age can use them even babies. Probiotics are frequently used in treating stomach bugs, even on infants with acute diarrhea. Probiotics in gastroenterology are used with food allergies and irritable bowel syndrome with great success. Intestinal gas is a normal result of food digestion, however some individuals suffer from excess gas production or flatulence, which is related to bacterial fermentation of poorly digested carbohydrates in the diet. Overgrowth of intestinal bacteria can also contribute to increase bloating and gas. Probiotics can modify the intestinal bacterial content, resulting in decreased flatulence.

Sometimes when we travel, we are exposed to foods and drinks that are contaminated with harmful organisms that cause diarrhea. The use of a good probiotic supplement while travelling may help to prevent the harmful organisms from taking up residence and causing damage to your intestines.

When choosing a probiotic, look for a product that has at least 6 billion colonies of the healthy bacteria in a serving size. It is best to choose a product that has several different strains which are mutually beneficial. There are many very good products on the market, however, at my clinic I like to use a very beneficial product called EndoMune. It was developed by our very own local gastroenterologist Dr. Hoberman. As a classical homeopath I treat people, not diagnosis. However, when looking at acute as well as chronic conditions such as allergies, ProBiotics is one of the first supplements I recommend.

*Lawrence J. Hoberman, M.D. is board certified in Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology. After a private practice of gastroenterology for over 25 years, he has chosen to focus his practice in a health and wellness program stressing preventive medicine. "Researching the field of probiotics and developing EndoMune® has been a very exciting and challenging journey. "I know that EndoMune® is a quality product that can be very beneficial in maintaining health and wellness."*

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