



Probiotic Facts

1. Our “microbiota” is the collection of about 100 trillion bacteria (10 times as many as our own cells) composed of 100s of species that live in an on us. They serve health in many ways including digestion, vitamin production, immune function, and prevention of infections with harmful organisms.
2. The microbiome can be damaged by antibiotics and eating too many processed foods.
3. Medical conditions such as antibiotic associated diarrhea, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, allergies, and bacterial vaginosis have been linked to an abnormal microbiome.
4. There are many studies that show that taking probiotics may benefit these and other conditions.
5. A healthy microbiome needs prebiotics, complex sugars and fibers found in foods. Minimally processed, plant based diets provide healthy prebiotic support. Foods rich in prebiotics include garlic, chicory, leeks, onions, Jerusalem artichoke, asparagus, bananas, eggplant, honey, green tea, legumes, yogurt, and breast milk. Food additives that are prebiotic include inulin, oligofructose, galactooligosaccharides, and lactulose.
6. Bacterial and fungal species that have been studied and found to be beneficial to human health include:
 - a. Lactobacillus species (rhamnosus, bulgaricus, acidophilus, casei, planarum, etc.)
 - b. Bifidobacter species (lactis, breve, longum, bifidum, infantis, etc)
 - c. Streptococcus thermophilus
 - d. Saccharomyces boulardii (a healthy yeast)
7. Dietary sources of probiotics include:
 - a. Yogurt, get minimally processed products with live cultures and little or no added sugar.
 - b. Kefir: A fermented yogurt-like milk drink
 - c. Kombucha: a fizzy fermented tea
 - d. Kimchi, sauerkraut, and other fermented foods.
8. When choosing a probiotic for general health
 - a. Buy a product that contains several bifidobacter and lactobacillus species (3-4 of each) and delivers a dose of 10-20 billion “colony forming units”(CFU)
 - b. Keep in mind that labels quote the CFUs present at time of manufacture. Most products, even when properly transported and stored, lose about 2% potency per month. Higher quality brands will have a guaranteed dose at expiration date somewhere on the bottle.
 - c. Most products are gluten free, some have dairy.
 - d. Store in refrigerator or freeze for longest shelf life. Storage at room temperature is acceptable; avoid extremes of heat or variable temperatures.

- e. Take on an empty stomach with room temperature non-chlorinated water. At bedtime when you brush your teeth is good!
9. If you suffer from a medical condition you may benefit from specific formulations or dosages. Ask your health care professional. At True North we strive to keep up with the research in this rapidly evolving field.
 10. Probiotics work best when they are part of a healthy lifestyle:
 - a. Eat lots of fruits and vegetables
 - b. Eat antibiotic free meats and poultry in moderation.
 - c. Avoid taking unnecessary antibiotics for infections. Pharmaceutical antibiotics are way overprescribed in this country. There are other treatments that support the immune system and help speed recovery from infections. Ask your health professional.
 - d. Speak up to keep our environment free of antibiotics. Overuse in the food industry and poor pharmaceutical disposal practices have contaminated our water and soil. We need to hold these institutions accountable.
 11. For more information:
 - a. "Some of My Best Friends are Germs" May 15, 2013 New York Times article by Michael Pollan. Freely available on the internet. A fascinating look at the research currently being done field.
 - b. Consumer Labs: An organization whose mission is "To identify the best quality health and nutrition products through independent testing." Membership at \$3.00/month gets you access to all their product testing and lots of excellent information. Their article on probiotics is excellent. www.consumerlabs.com.
 - c. Trust Your Gut: Getting Lasting Healing from IBS and Other Chronic Digestive Problems Without Drugs by Gregory Plotnikoff M.D. and Mark B. Weisberg PhD. Goes beyond probiotics and outlines a safe, effective plan for dealing with gastrointestinal problems such as IBS.
 - d. Digestive Wellness by Elizabeth Lipski. Excellent and in depth. The bible on this topic.

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