

Gut Feelings

Probiotics & Prebiotics

Probiotics are beneficial because they help to keep your digestive system healthy, function properly and help to protect against infection. Disorders can arise from an unhealthy gut. A person could have gastrointestinal problems along with inadequately absorbing nutrients.

There are different live and active cultures of probiotics. The probiotics reach the digestive system in a live state. Reaching the gut in a live state can help to inhibit the increase of harmful bacteria.

Probiotics have been found to improve regularity, antibiotic-associated diarrhea, disease/infection prevention, and reduce the number of pathogens located in the digestive system. Probiotics have also been associated with reducing the risk of allergies, which could also lead to decreased symptoms of lactose intolerance. By consuming foods that contain probiotics, you also get the extra benefits of other nutrients contained in that food.



Harmful bacteria

Definitions:

- Prebiotic - non-digestible food ingredients that stimulate bacteria in the colon to improve the health of the host.
- Probiotic - live microorganisms which when administered in adequate amounts confer a health benefit on the host.
- Synbiotic - combined probiotic with a prebiotic; prebiotics are the “food source” for the probiotic.



Consumer Info

You need to be aware of what to look for when choosing a probiotic. All products vary and may make a claim that they contain probiotics but you need to be an informed consumer before



purchasing a probiotic or prebiotic product. Decide which outcome you are wanting to improve; immune support, antibiotic-associated diarrhea, regularity, etc.

Look for the number of probiotic strains per serving. You may have to contact the product company to determine the amount of live and active cultures contained in the product.

One such product that contains probiotics is yogurt. You can look for the “Live & Active Cultures” seal on yogurt.

Cereal, energy bars, and yogurt are a few products that could contain prebiotics.

Always follow the directions on the packaging related to dosing information, storage and use of the product. Remember to read the nutrition facts label and watch the expiration dates on all products.



Caution



Use caution when considering the use of probiotics with infants. Research being done in the area of probiotics is ongoing. Be a proactive consumer and research the reliability of all products before consuming them.

There is still research being conducted related to the safety of probiotics being used in children, the elderly, and immune compromised individuals.

Follow instructions carefully and always discuss the use of probiotics and prebiotics with a physician beginning use.