



Probiotics

WHAT ARE THEY?

Research has shown that intestinal health may affect overall health. Probiotics are living microorganisms from food or supplements that provide health benefits when ingested in sufficient quantities. Among the most commonly-used and best-studied probiotic organisms are the bacteria *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium*, and the yeast *Saccharomyces boulardii*. Our bowels have “good” bacteria whose balance can be disrupted by antibiotics, infections, dietary issues, and stress. Probiotics, or “prebiotics” such as soluble fiber and inulin, can help maintain or restore the good bacteria.

WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER TAKING THIS?

Probiotics may be useful for a wide variety of conditions, including preventing and treating allergies (food or environmental), inflammatory and irritable bowel disease, and antibiotic-associated diarrhea. Research suggests that probiotics may assist in nutrient absorption and digestion, decrease “leaky gut” syndrome, and support immune function. Probiotics are generally considered safe, and should be considered whenever antibiotics are used, except in certain circumstances such as immune deficiency from illness, during cancer treatment, or in children with short gut syndrome.

If any of the following conditions apply to you, ask your healthcare provider if you should consider probiotics:

- Taking or recently took prescription antibiotics
- Women’s issues (recurrent urogenital infection, recurrent bacterial vaginosis)
- Gastrointestinal issues (food intolerance, IBS, mild-moderate ulcerative colitis and Crohn’s)
- Eczema (atopic dermatitis)

HOW DO I TAKE IT?

Choosing and recommending probiotics can be tricky. While some conditions respond to probiotics regardless of the strains used, others respond to very specific strains.

DOSE: Specific strains and doses vary depending on condition and should be recommended by your healthcare provider. A variety of preparations are available. For general health maintenance, consider 3-10 billion colony forming units (CFUs) daily of a mixture of species/strains.

- Antibiotic-associated diarrhea:** In research studies, the type of probiotic strains used did not significantly affect outcomes, therefore choose a product with a mixture of strains. For the treatment of diarrhea, at least 10 billion CFUs daily is recommended.
- IBS:** *Bifidobacterium animalis* DN-173010 relieved bloating and increased stool frequency. Talk with your provider about dosing.
- Mild/moderate UC:** The combination product VSL#3 has proven beneficial in some patients. Talk with your provider about dosing.
- Recurrent urogenital infections** (esp. Bacterial vaginosis): *L. rhamnosus* GR-1 and *L. reuteri* RC-14 show promise for prevention and treatment. Talk with your provider about dosing.

CONCERNS?

Probiotics are generally considered safe, even when used with other medications or supplements. Infants, children, pregnant and nursing mothers can use probiotics. Finding the right strain and dose for optimal health is key.

Caution is advised in people with compromised immune systems from illness or during cancer treatment (some reports of blood infections have been reported), or in children with short-gut syndrome, a rare disorder.

Make sure to ask your health care provider exactly how and when you should take this product.