

# Probiotics: Your Gateway to Superior Health

By Louise McGill RHN

Are you noticing that the food industry is adding probiotics to more food these days? Are you wondering if it's a marketing ploy or whether it has its validity?

First off, what are probiotics? They are defined as “microorganisms that positively affect the health of our body when administered in adequate amounts.”<sup>1</sup> We often hear of them referred to as our “good bacteria”

Probiotics travel all through the intestinal tract which starts in your mouth, travels through the stomach, intestines, and ends at the anus. There are many health benefits adding probiotic organisms to the diet. It immensely boosts the immune system, inhibits disease causing organisms, improves digestion, vitamin synthesis, (allowing vitamins to work synergistically together) detoxification and protection from toxins. It also prevents diarrhea from various causes, reduces risk of irritable bowel syndromes, has cancer-protective effects, increases nutrient absorption, improves resistance to allergies, and reduces yeast and other infections. Seventy five per cent of your immune system is in your gut. This is significant! If we can support our gut with a healthy whole food diet, adequate water, and proper rest and encourage our good bacteria to thrive, then we can boost our immune system. This in turn helps us live our lives with more vitality.

So how do probiotics help? For starters, the good bacteria crowd out and engulf the bad bacteria. It increases certain compounds in the body to promote good inflammation.

This keeps the intestinal tract less permeable so that harmful microbes and toxins cannot enter your blood stream. The bottom line is the more good guys the better!

So where do we get more of these probiotics? Our body already has them, we just need to keep them thriving. Eating a clean whole food diet and refraining from refined sugar foods is a good place to start. A refined diet (aka sugar) feeds the bad bacteria. Active cultural probiotics are found in plain yogurt (no sugar please, that's just cancels out the effectiveness of the bacterial culture). If you really need it sweetened, stir in a little raw

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<sup>1</sup> Tannis, Allison BSc, MSc, RHN [Probiotic Rescue](#), John Wiley & Sons Canada Ltd, Mississauga, Ontario 2008, p 5

or unpasteurized honey. Another source is kefir (pronounced kee-fir or kef- fir), a fermented milk similar to yogurt, with high bacterial cultures. Start with just a tablespoon a day, or mix with a bit of unsweetened juice. The lactose in kefir is all broken down so it should be tolerated by the lactose intolerant. Lastly fermented vegetables, like sauerkraut are a good source. (For store bought, again no sugar) See [www.nutritionallyfit.ca](http://www.nutritionallyfit.ca) for how to make your own. Probiotics can also be purchased as a supplement found in the refrigerated section of the health food store and many supermarkets today.

Probiotics will definitely help improve your health, but you still need to be mindful of reducing refined sugar or processed foods as these will feed the bad bacteria. Check with your nutritionist to find out how much you need to start your path to a stronger immune system.

How do you know if you need to take it or increase your amount? I'd say everyone does! With our busy schedules, increased stress and higher incidence environmental toxins we need all the help it can get to keep up with the demands we are placing on our immune systems. You can be sure to hear a lot more about the benefits of probiotics from the media. Why not get started now?

If you need more information on how it can help you, call or email me at [info@nutritionallyfit.ca](mailto:info@nutritionallyfit.ca) or 905-201-0141.

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