



# Understanding the ‘Pros’ of Probiotics

By Trudie Mitschang

**BACTERIA. JUST THE** thought of it brings to mind disease-causing microbes lurking in public restrooms or hovering over office cubicle desktops. But not all bacteria are bad — or bad for you. Probiotics, also known as beneficial or “good” bacteria, naturally live in the digestive tract and perform many essential functions to keep a body healthy. The term “probiotic” comes from the root words pro and biota, meaning “for life,” and is commonly used to refer to dietary supplements or foods that contain beneficial bacteria similar to those normally found in the body.

When used as a dietary supplement, probiotics are known to restore the balance of the intestinal microflora that can become unbalanced due to illness, stress, age, traveling or the use of certain medications. In recent years, there has been a growing public and scientific interest in probiotics and their potential health benefits. Researchers are studying whether probiotics taken as foods or supplements can help treat or prevent certain types of illness, including irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and various digestive problems. While study results vary, there is encouraging evidence, especially for those with autoimmune and immune deficiency diseases, that probiotics may help minimize digestive track issues.

## Probiotics Versus Antibiotics

Many patients with primary immune deficiency disease (PI) are frequent users of antibiotics. They are powerful aids in the fight against disease, but most antibiotics not only destroy harmful bacteria, they also wipe out the good bacteria the body needs to stay healthy. Many people who are regularly prescribed antibiotics know all too well that the positive effects of antibiotic treatment are often tempered by unpleasant side effects like diarrhea and IBS that may signal the antibiotics have upset the balance of good bacteria in the gut. Taking probiotics in food or as an oral supplement can help repopulate the beneficial bacteria and reverse the harmful after-effects of antibiotic treatment. Keep in mind the U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not regulate probiotics, so a doctor should be consulted prior to starting any supplement regimen.

## Shopping Cheat Sheet

The names of the different strains of probiotics may initially seem foreign and very confusing. Although far from an

exhaustive guide, here is a quick reference of the top probiotic strains to look for on product labels.

- *Lactobacillus*. This common probiotic is typically found in foods. It might also appear on a product label as acidophilus or *L. acidophilus*, or as *Lactobacillus* with another bacteria name such as *bulgaricus*. *Lactobacillus* is touted as a treatment for numerous health issues, including diarrhea, skin problems, lactose intolerance, high cholesterol, yeast infections and urinary tract infections. It is considered especially effective in treating diarrhea caused by viruses and medications.

- *Bifidobacterium*. This probiotic strain occurs naturally in the digestive system. Other label ingredient names may include *B. bifidum*, *bifidus* and *B. breve*. *Bifidobacterium* is recommended in supplement form for those who have been on antibiotics, and is therefore a strain that could be helpful to PI patients. Some studies suggest that *Bifidobacterium* can prevent intestinal infections and diarrhea caused by antibiotics.

- *Streptococcus thermophilus*. This friendly bacterium strain is found in fermented foods such as yogurt and mozzarella cheese. In the body, it helps treat gastrointestinal (GI) disorders and lactose intolerance.

- *Food-based options*. Many people associate yogurt with probiotics, but to get the full health benefits, make sure to look for yogurts with “live and active cultures.” Many commercial yogurts are heat-treated or pasteurized, resulting in the loss of these valuable cultures. There are also nondairy yogurt options containing live cultures that are made from rice, soy and coconut milk. Other dairy-free options for food-based good bacteria include brewer’s yeast, miso and sauerkraut.

## Intestinal Wonder Workers

For PI patients who struggle with gut issues or who have been prescribed multiple courses of antibiotics, could a daily dose of good bacteria be the answer to improved health and wellness? Although still controversial in some medical circles, there seems to be increasing evidence that these intestinal wonder workers could hold the key to a more balanced GI track. ■

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### Jarrow Formulas Saccharomyces Boulardii Probiotic Supplement

Saccharomyces boulardii is a probiotic yeast strain that survives passage through stomach acid and delivers its benefits to the intestinal tract. This strain

helps protect and maintain a normal intestinal microflora, which in turn helps support intestinal health and immune response. It also works to restore the normal intestinal microflora when taking certain medications and during travel. \$17.99; [Vitacost.com](http://Vitacost.com)

### Culturelle

With a full line of age-specific products, Culturelle is one of the most popular probiotic brands in the U.S. Culturelle Digestive Health Daily Probiotic Formula contains naturally sourced ingredients that work with the body to support digestive health. Ingredients include Lactobacillus GG. 50 capsules \$34.99; [Walgreens.com](http://Walgreens.com)



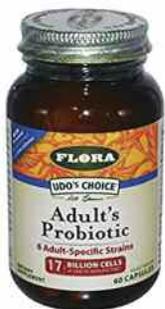
## Shopping Guide to Probiotics

### Natren Healthy Trinity

Each nondairy probiotic capsule contains a minimum of 30 billion colony forming units of three potent, super strains of beneficial bacteria. Healthy Trinity's bile-resistant super strains are then released directly into the small intestine in the next stage of digestion, when bile breaks down the oil carrier and allows the beneficial bacteria to disperse through the gastrointestinal tract. \$69.95; [Natren.com](http://Natren.com)

### Udo's Choice Adult's Blend Probiotic Capsules

Udo's Choice Adult's Probiotic contains eight strains of adult-specific good bacteria. Each vegetarian capsule contains 12 billion viable cells at date of manufacture. 60 capsules \$15.54; [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)



### Dr. Ohhira Probiotics

Dr. Ohhira Probiotics contain 12 synergistic strains of probiotics that have been developed by a growth/production process that requires three years to five years of fermentation. This extended fermentation process enables the strains of bacteria to grow and proliferate, and also results in the production of substantial metabolic byproducts and other accessory nutrients. Original formula (30 capsules) \$28.35; [drohhiraprobiotics.com](http://drohhiraprobiotics.com)



### Kevita Cleansing Probiotic Tonic

Described as a "deep hit of lemony sweetness combined with a tangy note of apple cider vinegar and a punch of citrus," this probiotic tonic offers a drinkable method of ingesting good bacteria. Fermented with both apple cider vinegar and a proprietary water kefir culture, every bottle contains four strains of live probiotics.

At health food stores nationwide and [Kevita.com](http://Kevita.com)



*These products are representative examples of what is on the market and are not endorsed as safe, effective or beneficial by IG Living. Patients are advised to check with their physician prior to introducing any products into their regimen.*