

Probiotics, Part 2

What Are Good and Bad Bacteria and What Affects Their Balance?

A good healthy colon can be compared to natural prairie with many different wild plants all-growing in natural ecological balance. This is bowel ecology. How does your "garden" grow? Within your GI tract there are few bacteria in your stomach due to the extreme acids. Most of your bacteria live much further down in your colon where the acidity is much lower. It is good to maintain a balance between the "good" and the "bad" bacteria. A healthy person has about 85% good and 15% bad bacteria. The good bacteria keep the "bad" bacteria at bay. The word eubiosis means balanced while dysbiosis means unbalanced. Antibiotics, NSAIDs, aging, or illness can upset this balance.



What Bacterial Strains Should Your Probiotic Contain?

The strains that have been researched the most frequently are the lactobacillus and bifidobacterium strains and saccharomyces. Lactobacillus (commonly found in yogurt) has been found to crowd out "bad" bacteria

and aid in controlling diarrhea conditions. It also controls the growth h. pylori in the stomach which can produce ulcers. Bifido has been shown to reduce gut permeability or "leaky gut". Saccharomyces is known to help control Candida overgrowth and help with Crohn's disease. All 3 strains improve the immune system. A probiotic that contains these three organisms can be of great value.

What Are the Hidden Facts About Probiotics?

Research shows that probiotics are very helpful in maintaining a healthy gut flora. However, research also shows that the bacteria in probiotics will never set up permanent colonies in your gut. If you stop taking probiotics, stool samples after 30 days show that the helpful bacteria have diminished to their original numbers in your gut. If you also provide non-digestible carbohydrate fibers (ex: inulin fibers) during that time you will allow your resident bacteria to grow and multiply into new colonies to crowd out the "bad" bacteria.

What's The Bottom Line about Probiotics?

Probiotics are helpful for both children and adults. Studies show that they help with digestion, immunity, leaky gut and many other issues by helping to create a balance between "good" and "bad" bacteria. They must be taken on a regular basis. If steps are not taken to restore your normal flora like eating foods that provide "nesting" material for new resident bacterial colonies, then their benefit will last only about 30 days after you stop taking them. Oh, and by the way, yogurt does not contain all 3 strains of the most beneficial probiotic organisms.