

Probiotics



What are probiotics?

Probiotics are what many people call “friendly bacteria” or “good bacteria”. They are bacteria that live in the body and help it work well. Often probiotics help defend the body from infections caused by unfriendly bacteria or other germs.

What do probiotics do: how are they helpful?

The body does not need the addition of food and supplements that contain probiotics to be healthy. However, food and supplements that contain probiotics assist the job of the “good” bacteria already present in your gut. Probiotics may help keep you healthy by:

- Decreasing the number of “bad” bacteria in your gut that can cause infections or inflammation
- Replacing the body’s “good” bacteria that have been lost when taking antibiotics (for example)
- Restoring the body’s “good” versus “bad” bacterial balance, which then helps to keep your body functioning properly.

What are some examples of probiotics?

Probiotics that are naturally found in your intestines include: *Saccharomyces boulardii* (a yeast) and bacteria in the *Lactobacillus* and *Bifobacterium* families of microorganisms. Outside of the body, *Lactobacillus acidophilus* is the probiotic that is found in some yogurts.

Foods that contain probiotics include: some juices and soy drinks, fermented and unfermented milk, buttermilk, some soft cheeses, miso, kefir, kim chi, sauerkraut, and many pickles. As said, probably the most well-known food product that contains probiotics is yogurt.

Supplements: dietary probiotic supplements. Two that are available at most pharmacies are:

1. Florajen3 and Florajen4kids (safe down to 6 months of age). Ask your pharmacist as these are often kept behind the counter at the pharmacy because they must be kept refrigerated.
2. Culturelle and Culturelle for kids (safe down to 12 months of age)

When should you take a probiotic?

If taking with an antibiotic, it is best taken 2 hours before or after the antibiotic.

Who should not take a probiotic?

Those who should not take a probiotic include individuals who are severely immunocompromised or those individuals taking immunosuppressants such as cyclosporine, azathioprine, or tacrolimus. If currently on chemotherapy, please consult your Oncologist first. Also, probiotics should not be taken if you are pregnant or have recently delivered a baby.

How much do probiotics cost?

This can vary by pharmacy. Florajen products range from \$10-\$20 while Culturelle products range from \$20-\$30.

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