

Probiotics: Friendly Bacteria Battle Infection and Enhance Health

Probiotics are friendly bacteria your body relies on for metabolizing foods, absorbing nutrients, and preventing colonization by harmful bacteria.

Acidophilus and bifidobacteria, in particular, promote a balanced intestinal tract by producing organic compounds that increase the acidity of your intestine and inhibit reproduction of harmful bacteria.

Unfortunately, friendly bacteria numbers decline as we age, and modern antibiotics, chemotherapy, food additives, alcohol, smoke, stress, and poor dietary habits also destroy friendly bacteria.

When harmful microbes take over, they cause infections and also produce byproducts associated with cancer and other diseases. When friendly bacteria dominate, the odds are you won't know you've ever been under siege by harmful microbes!

Where do friendly bacteria—or probiotics—come from? Many folks think of “yogurt;” however, many of the yogurt products on the market have been pasteurized after the live cultures are added, and pasteurization destroys these live cultures.

Similarly, with supplements, many of the products on the market have “dead bugs.” Raw materials that are old, or have been improperly handled or manufactured, often deliver cultures that are “dead on arrival.” Alas, consumers pay a lot of money each year for probiotics that are inactive.

Because so many things can affect the viability of probiotics, it's critical to buy from a vendor who does rig-

orous testing against product label claims and does frequent production runs to ensure fresh stock.

Now, for some quick tips for buying and using probiotics.

- First, to get any significant health benefits, you need to consume at least 2 to 5 billion CFUs (colony forming units) of probiotics per day.



Cindy Marteney

- Second, it's important for probiotics strains to include “acid resistant” strains, which means strains that can pass through the hydrochloric acid churn of stomach digestion.
- Third, it helps to take probiotics with fiber, otherwise known as “prebiotics,” which nourish and help friendly bacteria multiply in your gastrointestinal tract.
- Fourth, store your probiotics in a cool, dry area if shelf-stable, or in the refrigerator, and use what you buy immediately to ensure freshness.
- And, finally, buy from a reputable vendor, ideally one that does independent laboratory testing to validate active culture claims!

Cindy Marteney is the president of Our Health Co-op, which focuses on healthy aging and making high-quality dietary supplements affordable, especially for those with limited means. Our Health Co-op was recognized by SupplementQuality.com as a “quality vendor” in 2004. Write to cindy@ourhealthcoop.com. Learn more at www.ourhealthcoop.com or call 561.656.4011.