

Probiotics Deep Dive

Probiotics help maintain a healthy balance in the digestive system. Learn about the balance of good and bad bacteria in your gut microbiome, and how these can affect your overall health!

Probiotics Support Gut Health

Probiotics are live microorganisms (normally bacteria or yeast) that occur naturally in fermented foods, such as yogurt and sauerkraut. They can also be added to various foods and are available as dietary supplements. Research suggests a potential connection between gut microbiome microorganisms and certain health conditions. Probiotics may help alleviate symptoms associated with these conditions and support overall digestive health.



What is “Gut Microbiome”?

A ‘biome’ is a unique ecosystem characterized by its environment and the diverse array of living organisms it supports. Your gut, located in your intestines, serves as a miniature (or micro) biome, home to trillions of microscopic organisms. These include over a thousand species of bacteria, as well as viruses, fungi, and parasites.

Probiotic Benefits

When you consume foods rich in probiotics, you help increase the population of beneficial microorganisms in your gut. These microorganisms support gut health by allowing less room for, and promoting the secretion of substances that inhibit the growth of harmful microorganisms. They also regulate energy breakdown, use, and storage in the body, and strengthen the intestinal lining to prevent pathogens and harmful substances from entering the bloodstream.

Common Probiotic Sources

Since probiotics are naturally present in many everyday foods, encouraging their consumption in schools is simple! While there is no specific recommended dosage for probiotics, typical servings can be beneficial for children and may help support their digestive health. Common foods found in school meals that contain probiotics include yogurt, pickles, and cheese.

Tip: Choose products labeled with “live and active cultures,” as they are rich in probiotics. Look for options that include beneficial strains like **Lactobacillus** and **Bifidobacterium**.

Probiotics occur naturally in foods or can be added to supplements and probiotic-enriched products. Foods naturally rich in probiotics include fermented dairy and non-dairy products:

- yogurt
- kefir
- unpasteurized cheese
- traditional buttermilk
- sauerkraut
- kimchi
- miso
- tempeh



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