

Probiotics: Add More LIFE to Your Years

If you're like most people, **you really want to live life with passion** ... to feel at the height of health all the time, so you can accomplish more of what you want in life.

Probiotics can help you do just that!

The term probiotics comes from the Greek, "**for life**". (So now you probably understand what the word "*antibiotics*" really means.) Probiotics are live microorganisms that, when ingested in sufficient numbers, replenish the microflora in your intestinal tract and thereby perform a number of health-enhancing functions. The word "probiotic" was introduced in 1965 to describe these growth promoting factors.

Historically, people used fermented foods like yogurt and sauerkraut both as food preservatives to limit spoilage, and for good health. In ancient Indian society, it was commonplace (and still is) to consume a before-dinner yogurt drink called a lassi and at the end of the meal, a small serving of curd. These traditions were based on the principle of using sour milk as a probiotic delivery system to the body. The Bulgarians are noted both for their longevity and their high consumption of fermented milk and kefir.

Since the 1970s, farmers have been using probiotics to improve: disease resistance and reproduction in their farm animals, milk yield, and egg production.

The World's Smartest Immune Booster

Increased understanding of bacterial effects on the GI and immune system has led to increased credibility and research in the use of probiotics over the past thirty years. Today the science of probiotics is a rapidly growing field, generating a great deal of interest, both from physicians and consumers.

I've heard it said, "Death begins in the colon." On the contrary, I'd rather say, "**life begins in the colon.**" Maintaining great colonic health is akin to maintaining improved overall health.

Some of the statistics about your colon read like a "Ripley's Believe It or Not". Did you know that ... ?

- There are 500 species of bacteria living inside you.
- One hundred trillion bacteria live inside you -- more than the number of cells you have in your entire body.
- The weight of these bacteria is about two to three pounds.

- Some of these bacteria are referred to as "good" and some as "bad". The ideal balance between them is 85% good and 15% bad.

This ratio between the "good" bacteria and the "bad" bacteria is critical to your optimal health. What sorts of things influence the ratio between good and bad bacteria? Diet, geographic location, age, stress, illnesses, and medications.

The term used to reference good floral balance is *eubiosis*, formed from the prefix *eu-* meaning, "good, well, true" combined with the suffix *-biosis* meaning "life". On the contrary, *dysbiosis* references an unbalanced situation, coming from the prefix *dys-*, which means "impaired, difficult, bad".

Before you were born, your GI tract was sterile. The moment you were born, colonization of bacteria began in your gut. The first bacteria to settle in were the immune-building ones from breast milk, increasing your level of health and favoring your survival.

In a sense, we spend the rest of our lives "trashing" it with bad stuff -- like poor dietary choices and other lifestyle choices. Or sometimes our environment does it for us. Yet gut flora, the microorganisms living in your gut, continually and dynamically affect your immune system.

Helpful bacteria prevent the growth of undesirable ones by competing for both nutrition and attachment sites in the tissues of the colon.

Where Have All the Bacteria Gone?

It seems that in our collective zeal to rid ourselves of disease and every trace of bacteria in our food supply and everywhere else, we may have outdone ourselves. As a whole, we are less exposed to bacteria now than in the past -both "bad" and "good" bacteria.

Foods that are presently being labeled as health-promoting foods contain good bacteria. Think cultured foods like yogurt, cheese, and sauerkraut.

But due to strict food safety regulations, less bacteria (bad or good) survive the manufacturing process. Many products are pasteurized or sterilized at the end of the production process, destroying bacteria.

While this may be helpful in disease prevention, it also means **we get less health-enhancing bacteria.**

Since helpful bacteria are increasingly absent in our food, it becomes even more important to include supplementation with probiotics to give our GI tract and our entire immune system an extra "edge" -- to maximize the effects of a healthy diet.