Probiotics

What are they?!

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Probiotics comes from the Latin word pro (“for”) and the Greek word “bios” (life). They are live bacteria and yeasts that benefit the digestive system. They either improve, or restore gut flora. The most common groups of probiotics include Lactobacillus an Bifidobacterium. Each group comprises different species and have many strains. Our gut flora performs many functions that are important to our health. Gut flora helps manufacture vitamins like Vitamin K and some of the B vitamins. Gut flora, also turns fibre into short-chain fats, which feed the gut wall and stimulate the immune system and strengthen the gut wall. This helps to prevent unwanted substances entering the body and providing an immune response. Probiotics are effective in reducing inflammation, blood pressure, and various digestive problems, including IBS and antibiotic associated symptoms.

What destroys them?

Lifestyle habits can destroy probiotics. Below are some common factors that affect our gut flora and production of probiotics.

1) Antibiotics – the destroy bacteria as a way of eliminating disease. It is essential to restore good bacteria during and after use of antibiotics.

2) NSAIDs- Painkillers, aspirins and over the counter medication can increase the permeability of the GI tract. When this occurs, the tract is more permeable to larger proteins, toxins and bacteria’s entering the immune system. This results in reactions (food allergies) and stress on the immune system.

3) Exposure to pollutants such as heavy metals, including a dental fillings.

4) Sterilized foods. During pasteurization, milk is heated to 162 degrees for a minimum of 15 seconds. This doesn’t eliminate bacteria, but drops some forms of bacteria to lower levels and extends shelf life. When you destroy the natural enzymes, proteins, and various forms of beneficial bacteria in raw milk, it can’t naturally ferment and remain consumable. It spoils. During ultra-pasteurization, milk or cream is heated almost instantaneously to about 280 degrees and then rapidly cooled. This extends shelf life, but also alters various proteins, flavour, and naturally occurring beneficial bacteria.

5) Artificial food colourings

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6) Altered fats in food products. Fats are necessary in producing and maintaining cell walls. Fats provide the barrier that keep many toxins, pathogens, and water-soluble compounds from freely crossing into the bloodstream. A diet containing artificial or poor-quality fats leads to permeable cell walls and the resulting difficulties with allergies, toxicity, and a chronic load on the immune system. The cell wall is not our only barrier to the outside world, it also is the “soil” or “field” where the protective bacterial microflora live and flourish. A break in the cell wall or barrier could be compared to having sewage drip into your supply of drinking water.

How to increase intake of Probiotics?

Probiotic foods can be found in live-cultured yoghurts, kefir, sauerkraut, algae’s (like Spirulina and Chlorella), tempeh, kimchi, and kombucha. We suggest that if you are taking anti-biotics, a good brand of Probiotic supplementation can be used to support gut flora restoration. It is recommend we consume 6-10 billion live CFU’s of probiotics a day. We suggest approaching your Nutritionist or GP for better recommendations for supplementation. However, for general good health, a multi strain probiotic that has both Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium species are likely best.