

A Probiotic a Day *Keeps the Doctor Away?*



We usually think of bacteria as something that makes us sick, but our bodies are full of bacteria, both good and bad — around 100 trillion of them in fact! Considering we have just some 35 trillion human cells in our bodies, these bacterial colonies outnumbered our cells by 3 to 1.

Probiotics, the beneficial bacteria, do a number of things that our bodies rely on for good health. For examples they produce enzymes that support digestion and keep our gut healthy, they also have vital effects in our immunity and prevent allergies, as well as reduce inflammation. Meta studies also show children and adults who take probiotics get half the number of fevers and sick days off school or work as others who do not.

Recent studies have shown that probiotics could improve our fat and sugar metabolism and help normalise cholesterol and high blood sugar. Our brain function and moods get better with abundant probiotics, too!

Reasons Why Your Beneficial Bacteria Are Depleted

- **Antibiotics:** These potent medications kill both good and bad bacteria
- **Stress:** Research shows chronic stress badly affects immunity and probiotic levels
- **Tap Water:** Chlorine in tap water kills a wide range of good and bad bacteria
- **Herbicides** – “RoundUp” (Glyphosate) is a herbicide commonly applied to GMO crops such as wheat and soy that increases of the potential pathogen Clostridium bacteria in the gut. This negative effect is commonly found in autistic children.

- **Prescription Drugs:** Treatments such as laxatives, oral contraceptives, anti-diabetic medications, radiation and chemotherapy can alter the microbiome.

- **Modern Day Western Diet:** High fat, high sugar (with refined/processed foods) and especially a low vegetable fibre diet all affects the gut flora levels negatively. Alcohol consumption has a bad influence as well.

Studies found that people who consume a Western diet and receive medical treatments have only half the levels of probiotics compared to native people. This is an indication of why **most of us are advised to take additional probiotics daily**—to continuously replenish these good bacteria and keep the levels up to the optimum.

Sources of Probiotics

Probiotics can be obtained from fermented foods like sauerkraut, kimchee and natto. Another great source, for those who are not allergic, are cultured dairy products such as yogurt, kefir and buttermilk. However, eating these fermented or cultured foods has its limitations. Many of them are loaded with sugar and may not even contain any live cultures as promised, especially once near the “use by” date.

If you opt for probiotic supplement, pay attention to the strains combination and the number of CFU’s to make sure you are getting the most ‘bugs for your buck’. Studies suggest that adults should look for supplements that provide at least 10 billion CFU’s a day to get the benefits.

“The beneficial bacteria are ideally **administered alive to be effective,**” advises Graeme Bradshaw, Naturopath and Founding Director at IMI (Integrated Medicine Institute). “The methods of manufacturing, shipping, storage and freight are all crucial to achieve this. At IMI our probiotic supplements are airfreighted directly to us in Hong Kong under temperature and humidity control, and then kept refrigerated in our Dispensary before reaching our customers. We take great care that our probiotics are both potent and alive.”

For a clinical grade probiotic supplement, Graeme recommends the BioCeuticals UltraBiotic 45, which provides a blend of 10 probiotic strains delivering 45 billion CFU’s per capsule. IMI also carries probiotic powder for babies and children, as well as temperature stable (non-refrigerated) probiotic for those who travel frequently.

If you are unsure of which probiotic supplement is right for you, please call in to see our naturopath on the shop floor in our dispensary, or contact IMI Dispensary Advisors, dispensary@imi.com.hk or call 2523 7121. All our probiotics range is available on IMI Supplements Online <http://shop.imi.com.hk>

