

Probiotics are Good for the Gut

Trillions of bacteria, both harmful and helpful, live in your gut. Probiotics are the “good” bacteria that help ferment, decompose and digest the foods we eat. Researchers have found that these probiotic bacteria may help you maintain a healthy immune system by keeping the “bad” bacteria in check. Over time, other factors, like diet, disease, antibiotics, and stress can change the number and kinds of bacteria living in your digestive system. Eating foods that contain beneficial probiotic bacteria may help restore the balance of microbes in your gut.

Probiotics can be found in some foods, beverages, and supplements. Yogurt is one of the most well-known and accessible foods that contains probiotics. In addition, it provides nutrients such as protein, calcium, and vitamin D. It is also easily digested by people who are lactose intolerant. Look for yogurts that have at least two probiotic bacterial strains, such as *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophiles*.

Other foods that contain probiotic bacteria include yogurt-like beverages known as kefir. Kefirs are a fermented dairy product that may contain as many as 10 strains of probiotic bacteria. Acidophilus milk is fermented with *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and may be easier for some to digest than regular milk.

Probiotics can also be found in naturally fermented foods such as unpasteurized sauerkraut, kimchi, kombucha teas, and fermented soybean products such as tempeh, miso, and natto. There are also some probiotic supplements in pill form, such as Culturelle, Digestive, and Align, as well as other brands. While probiotic foods and supplements are thought to be safe for most people, some people with immune system problems or other serious health conditions shouldn't take them. Talk to your doctor first to make sure they are okay for you.



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