



How to Choose Beneficial Probiotic Bacteria



What Are Probiotics?

Probiotics are the beneficial bacteria that are found in a healthy human digestive system. There are five major types of bacteria in the gut with many different strains. It has been estimated that there are 300 to 500 strains of beneficial bacteria that inhabit the human digestive tract. Lactobacilli and bifida bacteria are the most well known beneficial bacteria and arguably the most important.

The world of probiotic supplements is a mystery to most people. Even those who understand the nutritional importance of probiotics are often confused by the many different products. Combine that with the conflicting health claims and it should not be surprising that most people have difficulty assessing and choosing probiotic supplements. This article will introduce the basics in choosing a probiotic.

There are two basic rules that can help you every time you are shopping for quality probiotics as well as other supplements. Buy products from reputable manufacturers and shop at stores that have the knowledge and skills to help you choose. The first rule applies all the time. If you want quality products that are both safe and effective, you must seek out quality brands. If you purchase cheap products of unknown quality then you get what you pay for. If you are a knowledgeable consumer who knows what they need then you can purchase your products wherever you prefer. A knowledgeable supplement store is a very valuable resource for those who want guidance and those that are looking for quality products.

Why Are Probiotics Important?

There are numerous nutritional and therapeutic uses of probiotics. We need beneficial bacteria doing their job in our gut to be healthy. A disruption in the micro flora of the digestive tracts can contribute to in many ways to poor health. The studies of probiotics for digestive health have revealed a wide array of benefits. Probiotics:

Aid digestion
Prevent and help diarrhea
Produce B Vitamins
Enhance calcium absorption
Produce natural selective anti-biotic like substances
Inhibit food pathogens, yeast and fungus
These are just a few of the many benefits of probiotics. Essentially, anyone with a digestive issue should use a high quality probiotic. You cannot over estimate the importance of probiotics for digestive health.

Recent studies have revealed that probiotic bacteria are also important immune system factors. Probiotics have been shown to:
Support liver function and detoxification
Augment immune function
Inhibit cancer development

These are just the most well researched benefits of probiotics.

Who Needs Probiotics

Anyone who has been using antibiotics needs to reestablish the good bacteria. Antibiotics kill off your good bacteria as well as the bad ones. Antibiotic use is probably the number one reason people take a probiotic supplement.

If you have any digestive problems you should try a good probiotic. From simple problems like gas and bloating to irritable bowel, colitis and Crohn's disease, probiotics are recommended and are likely to give you significant benefit.

If you have an immune dysfunction then a good probiotic supplements would be a reasonable adjunct to your nutritional program.

The Basic Distinctions

There are two primary distinctions between products and two secondary distinctions that you may want to consider. The two primary distinctions are the variety (or number) of bacteria strains and the amount (or potency) of live bacteria cells. The secondary

concerns are whether it should be refrigerated and/or enteric coated.

The Variety of Strains

It has been estimated that there are 300 to 500 strains of bacteria that inhabit the human digestive tract. These bacteria exist in harmony and provide the benefits previously described. When you purchase a probiotic supplement look for the variety of strains that may be present. You can find products with only one strain, or two strains, or three, six, nine, twelve, or fourteen different strains. You need to decide whether you want a few strains or a formula that has greater variety of strains. I prefer products that have a least eight different strains but there are times that you want a higher amount of a specific strain such as acidophilus or bifidus. Either approach is appropriate.

The Amount of Active Cells

The number of living bacterial cells in each capsule can vary from 1 billion to 50 billion cells per capsule. Any number of cells within this range can do the job. If the products are handled properly then any good probiotic supplement should be able to help you. It is all about getting the beneficial bacteria into your system and the more viable (living) cells there are to start with the more you will end up with. The emerging trend is for formulas to contain more and more living cells per dose. This should help consumers get quicker results as you start off with a much greater number of viable cells.

Is Refrigeration Required?

Some products should be refrigerated. Keeping cells cold until you take them keeps the cells more stable. However allowing the products to warm up to room temperature is not generally harmful. Probiotics do not spoil. They also do not lose potency rapidly under normal conditions, especially at room temperature. For general use it is best to follow the manufacturer's instructions. Refrigerate when so advised but don't worry if the product is not constantly refrigerated.

If refrigeration is difficult, then consider a brand that has been shown to be stable at room temperatures. There are several brands that have been shown to be stable and effective at

room temperature. These are especially useful when you are traveling or when refrigeration is not possible.

Is Enteric Coating Better?

One on the newest trends in probiotic development is the use of enteric coating or some other process designed to increase the survivability of bacteria through the stomach acids. While it is true that stomach acids are detrimental to bacteria that does not mean that all or even most probiotics are destroyed in the stomach. In fact, there is substantial scientific backing and experiential history that demonstrates that significant amounts of probiotic bacteria survive the trip through the stomach acids. People have been getting results using beneficial bacteria for ages, without refrigeration and without enteric coating.

If you purchase a product that is designed for delayed release then purchase a product manufactured by a reputable company. Then you are more likely to get a product that has been developed and studied to confirm how well the products deliver their load of live bacteria. You want to be sure that any delayed release product you use has been shown to be effective.

Conclusion

There are so many benefits provided by probiotic bacteria that everyone should consume foods that contain these beneficial bacteria. Foods such as yogurt, sauerkraut and other cultured foods. Anyone with a digestive issue should look to probiotic supplements to increase the good bacteria and improve the digestive balance. You cannot have good digestive health without abundant beneficial digestive bacteria. Better digestive health leads to better overall health.

Disclaimer

The information provided is nutritional only and is intended to help you develop a nutritional program that can support the functions of the body. The information provided is not intended as medical advice. For medical advice always consult your physicia