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## **Probiotics**

### ***Frequently Asked Questions***

#### **What are probiotics?**

Literally meaning “good for life,” probiotics are “friendly” bacteria that can help impact the balance of bacteria in the digestive tract, where about 70 percent of the body’s immune system is located. According to the World Health Organization, probiotics are living microorganisms that, when administered in adequate amounts, confer a health benefit on the host.

#### **What is the history of probiotics?**

A century ago, Russian Nobel Prize winner Eli Metchnikoff took note of the fact that Bulgarians, famous for their longevity, were great yogurt eaters. He wondered if there might be a connection. His subsequent research explored two areas: how cultured milk products (such as yogurt and cultured dairy drinks) could modulate the intestinal microflora in the digestive tract, and a possible correlation between life expectancy and cultured milk consumption. This early research formed the basis for the field of probiotics, launching decades of scientific studies all over the world that continue to uncover many potential health benefits of these beneficial microorganisms.

#### **How do probiotics work, and how often should I consume them to enjoy health benefits?**

Probiotics provide a beneficial action on the intestinal tract by modulating the intestinal microflora or by acting directly on intestinal cells. Though benefits vary depending on the type of probiotic bacteria used and the amount consumed, experts agree that daily consumption of probiotics is most beneficial (Sanders et al., 2004).

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# Dannon Probiotics Center

Digestible information on healthy bacteria

## **What health benefits do probiotics offer?**

Probiotics may help strengthen the body's natural defenses by providing a regular source of "friendly" bacteria for the intestinal tract, and may help correct an imbalance of "good" and "bad" bacteria in the intestinal tract. Many studies have shown that regular consumption of probiotics increases the number of beneficial bacteria found in the intestines, which can have many beneficial effects. Scientists have examined the role of probiotics in a number of areas including: constipation, colon cancer, diarrhea, inflammatory bowel disease, irritable bowel syndrome and immune function.

## **Can people who are lactose-intolerant consume probiotics?**

Probiotics contained in fermented milk products and yogurt can help decrease the symptoms of lactose intolerance. When present as live and active bacterial cultures in fermented milk products, probiotics reduce lactose content by "predigesting" some of the lactose, metabolizing it to lactic acid. The probiotic bacteria in these products that survive the trip to the intestinal tract may also provide additional lactase enzyme activity.

## **Are there different kinds of probiotics, and if so, which ones are best?**

There are many strains of beneficial bacteria that have probiotic potential. However, probiotics must survive the journey through the digestive system and make it to the intestine intact to have the desired positive effect. Science has identified certain types of cultures that are most likely to accomplish this -- *L. casei*, *L. acidophilus*, *L. plantarum* and *B. bifidum*. These are the cultures generally deemed most beneficial.

## **What are the advantages of consuming probiotics in cultured dairy foods?**

One advantage to consuming probiotics in cultured dairy foods is that they buffer stomach acids and increase the chance that the probiotics will survive and make it to the intestine. Another benefit is that cultured dairy foods provide a good source of calcium. In addition, during milk fermentation, cultures may also produce additional active components, such as functional peptides, which may confer further health benefits.

*For more information, visit [www.probioticscenter.com](http://www.probioticscenter.com).*

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