

# What Are Probiotics Good For? Understanding the Benefits

Probiotics are all the rage these days. It seems like a new brand of supplement or fermented product is released each day peddling the benefits of these friendly bugs. And for good reason. Simply speaking, probiotics are bacteria — but they aren't bad bacteria in the traditional sense like how germs cause infection.

Rather, these microscopic organisms are essential for life, and you have about a hundred trillion of them in your gut as you read this. The gut microbiota is best known as being needed for digestion. But these organisms can also have positive effects on the health of the brain, the resiliency and efficacy of the immune system, and even the proper functioning of the body's metabolism.

You can consume probiotics in several ways, including:

- Pill form
- Fermented food products (such as kefir, kombucha, sauerkraut, yogurt, etc.)
- Probiotics for Digestive Health

Probiotics are probably best known for their effects on digestive health. After all, every person's gut is full of these friendly bacteria. Certain strains of lactobacillus and bifidobacterium have been shown to be beneficial for both IBS-C (constipation predominant) and IBS-D (diarrhea predominant).

Some probiotics create fatty acids like butyrate when they metabolize certain plant fibers in the gut. These fatty acids may help reduce intestinal permeability, also known as leaky gut, which has been connected with many different bowel disorders.

Friendly bacteria have long been used to improve and restore healthy balance of microbiota in the bowel. This restoration of balance is beneficial for helping diarrhea, issues resulting from antibiotic consumption, gastrointestinal diseases, and more.

# Probiotics for Brain Health

Digestive health is not the only the thing that these microorganisms are known for. There is a lot of emerging science showing a connection between the gut microbiome and the brain. Scientists are calling this connection the “gut-brain axis.”

Some strains of healthy bacteria produce fatty acids that contribute to healthy, non-inflamed intestinal permeability. When this normal permeability is disrupted by stress, the gut can become more “leaky.” This leakiness can create an inflammatory state in the body that is associated with multiple psychiatric disorders.

The microbiome is also involved with the regulation of serotonin, which is critical for healthy brain function, along with many other functions. Consuming probiotics may be beneficial for the health of your brain.

## Probiotics for Immune Health

Because the microbiome is involved with so many different systems and processes in the body, it impacts the immune system.

Beneficial bacteria can have an effective role in the prevention of:

- Cancer
- Autoimmune diseases
- Allergies

A probiotic strain called lactobacillus casei Shirota may enhance the efficacy of macrophages, which are killer cells. This can contribute to the anticancer effect of the strain shown in multiple studies. Conversely, imbalance of the different varieties of bacteria in the gut has been shown to be associated with autoimmune diseases such as type 1 diabetes and certain cancers.

# Probiotics for Metabolic Health

In addition to the positive effects of probiotics on digestive, brain, and immune health, they can also be beneficial for maintaining a healthy weight. So if you are trying to lose a few pounds, it may be a good idea to get some probiotics in your diet.

The gut microbiota may be involved in the regulation of energy and storage of fat. There are significant variations in the makeup of the microbiome of healthy-weight individuals as compared to individuals who are obese.

The microbiota is shown to be largely involved in metabolic syndrome, which is characterized by excess midsection fat, high blood sugar and blood pressure, and unfavorable lipid profiles. Probiotic consumption may have beneficial effects on cholesterol and insulin sensitivity when coupled with a reduced-calorie diet.

## **Camel Milk as a Natural Source of Probiotics**

Researchers have recently studied camel milk to discover more about its inherent probiotic characteristics and fermentation profile. Especially in cases of raw camel milk, select isolated lactic acid bacteria have proven healthy natural sources for probiotics.

Combined with a modern lifestyle that is full of refined foods, stress, and antibiotics, the probiotics in camel milk can easily get your gut flora out of balance. It is important to tend to the health of your microbiome in order to prevent different health issues, as well as address ones you may already be dealing with.

You can start by consuming a serving of your favorite fermented food each day. Kefir or kombucha are great places to start, and you can add supplements if needed. Probiotics are truly one of the most underrated aspects of health, and camel milk may be a natural way to get your body its probiotics fill.