

Take a Closer Look . . .

at Probiotics

In addition to food quality, we must be concerned about proper digestion, absorption, and elimination. Food passes through a number of stages before the nutrients in it can nourish and repair cells and organs. Each stage is critical; even a slight breakdown along the way can result in incomplete nutrition, toxic overload, and compromised health. We aren't just what we eat, we are what we digest and absorb!

How Digestion Works

Let's look at what happens when we take a bite of food. Chewing stimulates the salivary glands and other digestive organs to prepare for the food. The esophagus massages the chewed food toward the stomach, which produces a highly acidic juice rich in enzymes that begin protein digestion. Next, the liver, gall bladder, and pancreas add digestive fluids to the partially digested food as it enters the intestines. Nutrients are absorbed into the bloodstream in the small intestine. Digestion and absorption are supported by the presence of huge numbers of friendly bacteria (probiotics), including *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, that aid in the absorption of nutrients, produce important vitamins, and provide a surface layer to protect against viruses, yeasts, and bacteria. *Bifidobacterium bifidum* help maintain a healthy environment in the large intestine.

Intestinal problems, including gas and irregular elimination as well as other more serious digestive disorders, can be the result of a depleted supply of friendly bacteria.

How do I know if I have an insufficient supply of friendly bacteria?

Many factors can reduce the natural probiotic population, including:

- Being fed formula instead of mother's milk as an infant
- Drinking chlorinated water, or an excessive amount of alcohol or caffeinated beverages
- Consuming too much meat, fat, or sugar
- Taking antibiotics and other medications
- Being exposed to emotional stress and environmental toxins

Proper digestion depends on enough good bacteria

A healthy intestine is one that maintains a critical balance of bacteria. Conditions such as stress, excessive alcohol use, and diets high in fat, meat, and sugar may endanger the fine balance of intestinal flora, resulting in weakened digestive and immune systems. In addition, inadequate food and rest, exposure to environmental toxins and antibacterial chemicals, chlorine and fluoride in drinking water, and undue use of antacids and antibiotics may alter the balance of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract and leave an intestinal environment in which pathogenic bacteria and yeast can flourish.

Although over-the-counter remedies for acid reflux and diarrhea are popular, consumers are becoming aware of the value of supplemental enzymes and beneficial bacteria. Worldwide, this natural approach has been used for many years. For example, millions of people in Japan take acidophilus as a proactive way to maintain health. The March 2002 issue of the *Harvard Health Letter* reveals that since 1917 in Finland "probiotics have been an important part of a healthy diet in a culture that prefers prevention to treatment."

The popular truism that
"we are what we eat"
must be further qualified;
specifically,
"we are what we digest."

The word probiotic literally means "for life." Our vast internal ecosystem, which contains thousands of billions of living microorganisms called intestinal flora, dramatically influences the body's metabolism, physical health, and mental well-being. Sufficient beneficial bacteria can help prevent negative influences such as free radicals, pathogens, and undigested fats and proteins from penetrating the intestinal wall and entering the bloodstream. Better digestion therefore can equal better quality of life.

What probiotics do in the body

Friendly bacteria have many important roles, such as:

- Enhancing absorption of nutrients
- Producing vitamins
- Supporting immunity
- Promoting healthy peristalsis and elimination
- Maintaining proper acid/alkaline (pH) intestinal balance

What you can do

In a perfect world, the human digestive system would have enough healthful bacteria to maintain optimum intestinal health. Unfortunately, today's modern lifestyle makes it almost impossible to avoid factors that can disturb the body's bacterial ecosystem. However, it is possible to encourage a healthy GI tract. Research has shown that, in addition to healthy lifestyle choices, dietary supplementation with probiotics can help balance the body's supply of friendly intestinal bacteria. The highest quality probiotic supplements contain live cultures, and starter nutrients that enable them to be strong enough to establish a healthy population of friendly bacteria. Simplicity's exceptional probiotic products offer an effective means of helping to offset the disturbing effects that dietary, environmental, and emotional stresses create in the gastrointestinal tract. A balanced digestive system alleviates much of the stress on your immune system, which can lead to an overall healthier you!

