

Probiotics

Healthy GI, Healthy You

by Margy Squires

Have probiotics become the latest buzzword synonymous with health? Or is it that these beneficial little critters are finally gaining the recognition too long deserved? Newer research suggests that having enough of this friendly kind of bacteria impacts more than your gastrointestinal tract. Brain function, chronic disorders like SEID (ME/CFS), fibromyalgia and even your ability to fight cancer and lose weight are under the influence of what's known as the intestinal or enteric nervous system. And probiotics "rule" that system.

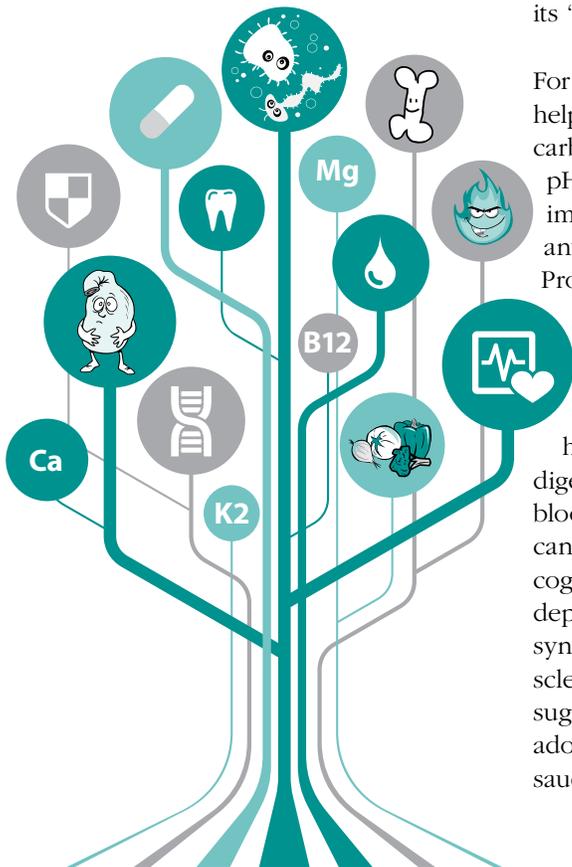
Originally scientists knew of the brain-gut connection but they thought the communication was one way, brain to gut. When you're stressed or nervous, you feel it with a nauseous stomach and sometimes diarrhea. Now scientists know that the communication goes both ways and your gut "talks" to your brain, too.

So if you've thought of your gastrointestinal (GI) tract as merely a transit system for food wastes, you're in for some surprising news. In places you cannot see, you have a community of trillions of bacteria (microflora) in your GI tract to help you digest your food, produce vitamins and offer immune defense. But this microflora is teeming with both friendly probiotic bacteria and not so friendly pathogens, fungus and parasites. The probiotics or good guys protect the lining of your GI tract – and that's a big job since the enteric nervous system has more surface area than your skin!

What's more, scientists often refer to this system as the "second brain" as it has nearly a billion neurons, uses more than 20 hormones and produces 70-80% of the body's immune cells. With immune, endocrine and nerve cells, the enteric nervous system communicates either in a good or not so good way to the rest of your body. Probiotics, by their very action, support and nourish this system. On the other hand, if bad bacteria take over the microflora, the enteric system loses its "power" both in the GI tract and body wide. Who do you want in charge?

For example, probiotics help produce certain vitamins (B1, B2, B5, B12, K2), help absorb minerals and break down foods to extract nutrients. Plus they digest carbohydrates for energy and produce short-chain fatty acids that maintain a pH environment which harmful bacteria cannot survive in. They prompt the immune system to recognize and target invaders and are involved in making anti-inflammatory agents helpful against chronic disease-provoking microbes. Probiotics also metabolize toxins before they can enter the bloodstream, even some like nitrates and procarcinogens which are cancer causing. Think what your body would be like without all those benefits!

Need more evidence? An imbalance or *dysbiosis* of microflora may result in harm beyond the obvious constipation, diarrhea, yeast infections and poor digestion. Lack of GI wall integrity leads to "leaky gut", allowing toxins into the bloodstream, triggering allergies and inflammation. The enteric nervous system can send signals to the brain that influence sleep, stress, memory, mood and cognition. These actions may impact a range of disorders including alcoholism, depression, ME/chronic fatigue syndrome (SEID), fibromyalgia and restless legs syndrome. The GI tract may have a role in neurological conditions like multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's and celiac disease. The good news is research studies suggest one way to get back into balance is with pre and probiotic therapy and adopting a diet that protects instead of destroys microflora with foods like kefir, sauerkraut and yogurt.



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Probiotics... *continued*

Probiotics offer protection with natural antibiotic warfare. Since bacteria are found in multiple places, probiotics may play a preventative role for urinary and upper respiratory tract infections, cold and flu and improving mouth flora to reduce cavities. By producing anti-inflammatory agents, probiotics may reduce inflammatory arthritis symptoms, obesity and heart disease risks. The more that is known about these amazing good guys and how they influence disease via the enteric system, the more respect they gain.

How do we know all this? A lot of the discovery credit goes to the international Human Microbiome Project, started in 2008. The Project expanded the science from looking at single cultures to studying “entire communities of microbes and their contributions to health and disease” in the intestines, skin, mouth and genitourinary tract.

There are more than 400 strains of probiotics. Just as a multivitamin mineral offers a broad spectrum of benefits, each individual vitamin, mineral and nutrient it contains varies in the way they promote those benefits. So, too, do the different strains of probiotics differ in their actions. In humans, lactobacilli and bifidobacteria are the predominant strains commonly present in the GI tract. Previously, probiotic supplements only contained one or two strains but now we know a variety is needed to both maintain a healthy enteric nervous system and healthy body, too.

“ Experts suggest a 4 to 25 billion microorganism count probiotic with multi-strains to cover all bacteria containing areas ”

Experts suggest a 4 to 25 billion microorganism count probiotic with multi-strains to cover all bacteria containing areas – skin, mouth, vagina, urinary and GI tract – to offer the most protection. Supplement for your needs; if you already have a chronic disorder, symptoms of dysbiosis and get frequent infections of any kind, you may need to repopulate your good guy “tenants” so they can in turn help you be healthier.

Don't sabotage your efforts! Like everything else, lifestyle choices affect your probiotic levels and ultimately rob you of their ability to sustain healthy parameters. High sugar and carbohydrate diets foster the growth of “bad” bacteria and yeast. Other substances like chlorine, meat and antacids lower the pH environment that good bacteria needs to flourish. Meat diets, hormone replacement and antibiotics reduce probiotic populations.

Probiotics & Health

Normalizing GI microflora with probiotics has been shown to help these conditions according to research studies.*

- ◆ Allergies
- ◆ Antibiotic-induced Diarrhea
- ◆ Brain Chemicals
(Cognition, Depression, Memory, Mood)
- ◆ Central Nervous System Disorders
(Autism, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's)
- ◆ Chronic Pain
- ◆ Fibromyalgia & SEID (ME/CFS)
- ◆ Helicobacter Pylori
- ◆ High Cholesterol & Triglyceride Levels
- ◆ Inflammatory Bowel Disorders
(Celiac, Colitis, Crohn's)
- ◆ Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- ◆ Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease
- ◆ Obesity
- ◆ Skin Disorders
- ◆ Systemic (body wide) Inflammation
- ◆ Yeast Overgrowth (Candida)

**For informational purposes only.*

By now you should be convinced that supplementing with probiotics should be a daily habit, just like your multivitamin mineral complex. Both offer insurance that you've covered yourself defensively by supporting your body's ability to maintain optimal health.

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