Benefits and Applications of Probiotics



Probiotics are live bacteria that are found in foods and supplements. They are considered good for your health. Probiotics are especially beneficial for your gastrointestinal tract, but the full extent of their benefits are still unknown.

Probiotics and Your Microbiome

Your microbiome is essentially all the different microorganisms that are in your body. One study estimated that there are around 30 trillion human cells in a body, and 39 trillion bacterial cells!

Probiotics, to put it simply, can change the composition of your microbiome. They help to favor the good bacteria over the harmful bacteria. Unfortunately, strains of probiotics needed as well as doses are still being studied. Certain strains of probiotics were found to reduce the occurrence of necrotizing enterocolitis, a common cause of complications and death in preterm infants. The majority of studies have shown that there is an improvement in constipation with probiotics , although the specific strain and amount tends to vary between studies. Probiotics should be live organisms. You should also look for one with at least 3-4 strands of bacteria, and you want there to be at least 10 billion bacteria per dose. Those are tall orders! Especially considering one serving of yogurt or kefir will generally satisfy those requirements.

Even if you can't find a supplement that meets all of those requirements, it's good to aim for as high of bacteria number as you can. You also want to make sure you take into account how the bacteria will get to the gastrointestinal tract. Many powders do not protect the bacteria from stomach acid, so their usefulness decreases.

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