

Prebiotics and Probiotics

Intestinal Bacteria:

You have bacteria living in your gut. Some of them could make you sick, however there are also bacteria that are actually beneficial. These "friendly" bacteria help keep bad bacteria and yeast from growing in your intestinal tract. Bacteria also help make vitamin K and keep your immune system functioning properly.

Normally you have an abundance of friendly bacteria, however antibiotic therapy, stress and poor dietary choices may all cause intestinal dysbiosis, which is a bacterial imbalance that results in overgrowth of bad bacteria and yeast.

Dysbiosis:

When the bad bacteria and yeast become overgrown in your intestinal tract, you have a condition called dysbiosis. Dysbiosis has been linked with disorders like yeast infections, irritable bowel syndrome and rheumatoid arthritis. A common cause of dysbiosis is antibiotic therapy. The antibiotics that you take for killing an infection will also kill the healthy bacteria in your digestive tract.

Prebiotics and Probiotics:

Prebiotics and probiotics can restore the balance of bacteria in your digestive tract. Probiotics are beneficial bacteria that can be found in various foods. When you eat probiotics, you will add these healthy bacteria to your intestinal tract. Common strains include Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium families of bacteria.

Prebiotics are non-digestible foods that make their way through our digestive system and help good bacteria grow and flourish. Prebiotics keep beneficial bacteria healthy.

Prebiotics in the Diet:

Prebiotics that feed the beneficial bacteria in your gut mostly come from carbohydrate fibers called oligosaccharides. You don't digest them, so the oligosaccharides remain in the digestive tract and stimulate the growth of beneficial bacteria. Sources of oligosaccharides include fruits, legumes, and whole grains. Fructo-oligosaccharides) may be taken as a supplement or added to foods. Yogurt made with bifidobacteria contain oligosaccharides.

Probiotics in the Diet:

Probiotic bacteria like lactobacilli are naturally found in fermented foods like sauerkraut and yogurt. Some foods will have added probiotics as healthy nutritional ingredients, which will be evident on the label.

Prebiotic and Probiotic Supplements:

Probiotics are widely available as supplements. However, not all probiotic supplements are created equal. To make sure your probiotics get a good start, add some oligosaccharides to keep the probiotic bacteria healthy in your digestive system. The prebiotics may be taken as a supplement or may be added to your health foods. Be sure to check your local health food stores and look on labels when you buy probiotic supplements.