

Are Probiotics a Smart Choice?

One of the most important things anyone can do to improve their health is take a probiotic. Probiotics help restore the proper balance in one of the most crucial parts of our body ... many health experts say THE most crucial part of the body: the gut.

Only recently have doctors discovered that a staggering 85 percent of our health problems originate in our gut, also known as intestines. Likewise, 70 percent of our immune system is in our intestines. Shocking!

This is actually a good news/bad news scenario in that the good news is establishing good gut health is relatively easy and cheap. The bad news is that those of us who do nothing are at great risk of having some type of health problem originating from the gut.

Here's the bottom line: we have literally trillions of bacteria in our gut. Many, many of them are essential to our overall good health. These are called "good" bacteria. The problem is, our American lifestyle has killed many of these good bacteria. When that happens, all kinds of problems can erupt. The quick fix is to put back those good bacteria.

The easiest way to do that is with a pill. A probiotic. There are lots of them on the market, such as the supplement called Acidophilus. Then there private brands from which to choose.

There are also foods that add good bacteria back into our gut, such as yogurt. The problem with yogurt is that most brands are loaded with sugar, often as much as one-and-a-half ice cream cones! So if you choose yogurt, choose the plain kind, then if you want to add sweetness, throw in some berries.

Fermented foods are great probiotics. Topping the list is the Korean favorite Kimchi, which is available at most grocery stores. There are lots of ways to prepare it, such as adding it to scrambled eggs in the morning or to soups. Some people eat it right out of the jar.

As for me, I find it just safer and easier to take a probiotic supplement so I don't have to constantly keep track of whether I've eaten probiotic foods, and whether I've had enough of them. Plus, lots of us steer clear of dairy, so that means no yogurt.

You may be wondering how we got into this mess in the first place. How is it that so many of our good, life-sustaining bacteria are being wiped-out? There are several culprits.

The main one is our SAD diet. Remember, SAD stands for Standard American Diet. In other words, processed foods kill our good bacteria ... things like soda. Honestly, that stuff is poison.

Another huge good bacteria killer is antibiotics. Any time you take an antibiotic you should be aware that it is not only killing the bad bacteria for which it is intended, but it is also killing the good bacteria. These days wise doctors who prescribe antibiotics are telling their patients to also take a probiotic, such as Acidophilus for at least the entire run of the antibiotic, often longer.

A third major cause of the destruction of our good bacteria is all the antibacterial products we use, such as antibacterial soaps. Similar to antibiotics, these soaps kill not only the bad bacteria, but also the good ones. Many doctors will tell you the non-antibacterial ones are better because they still clean your hands sufficiently, while at the same time leaving your good bacteria intact.

So if you are wondering why you don't feel as good as you should, the answer probably originates in your gut. By taking

a probiotic, over time, you will restore the good bacteria you need to maintain the proper health.