



University of California
Cooperative Extension
Tulare County

Agriculture and Natural Resources



Prepared by: _____

PROBIOTICS = FRIENDLY BACTERIA

There is a growing interest in the use of foods help improve health status. One area is in the use of foods that contain friendly bacteria also known as probiotics.

What are Probiotics?

Probiotics are friendly bacterias that help maintain a balance between good and bad bacteria in the intestine. The primary food sources of probiotics in the United States are acidophilus milk, and fermented milk products, such as yogurt and kefirs. They are also available in supplement forms. Probiotics or friendly bacterias such as Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium make their home along with bad bacterias, coliforms and yeasts in the intestinal tract of all men, women and children. Together, these amount to about four pounds of bacteria in the intestinal tract. A balance of bacteria must exist at all times to maintain a healthy intestine and prevent disease.

Benefits of Probiotics

Probiotics play an important role in digestion, vitamin and mineral availability and help improve the usage of other vitamins and minerals. Probiotics help breakdown protein into simpler units called amino acids. Probiotic cultures increase the level of vitamins B6, B12, niacin, riboflavin and folic acid in yogurts, milks, kefir and some cheeses. These friendly cultures also improve the usage of digested fats and minerals, like calcium. Other probiotic benefits include bowel regularity and decreased lactose intolerance.

The University of California, in accordance with applicable federal and state law and University policy, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, medical condition (cancer-related), ancestry, marital status, citizenship, sexual orientation, or status as a Vietnam-era veteran or special disabled veteran. The University also prohibits sexual harassment. Inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies may be directed to the Affirmative Action Director, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 1111 Franklin Street, 6th Floor, Oakland, CA 94607-5200. (510) 987-0096.



For special assistance
regarding our programs,
please contact us.

Probiotics are also known to have preventative characteristics. With the increased use of antibiotics, the friendly bacterias of the intestine are destroyed along with the bad bacterias. This causes an imbalance between good and bad bacterias putting individual at increased risk of bacterial infection. Eating foods with good bacterias can help maintain the balance during the use of antibiotics. Probiotic bacterias may also reduce the risk of colon cancer by decreasing the number of tumors. These healthy bacterias improve immunity by activating antibodies that protect the body from bacterial infection and disease.

Probiotic from Foods vs Supplementation

As with all supplements, the question whether probiotic supplementation is better than the consumption of probiotics from foods arises. Although current research has not found any adverse side effects or reactions to probiotic supplementation, food sources are recommended. Food sources contain other nutrients such as calcium, proteins, and some essential fats.

The Future of Probiotics

Much remains unknown about of probiotics and their specific health promoting benefits. Future research is needed to discover more friendly bacterias, identify their specific benefits and how much is needed.

Source: Dairy Council of California, http://www.dairycouncilofca.org/hp/hp_hot_pbio.htm

#

Cooperative Extension programs are available to any individual or group without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age or handicap. Named products are used for clarification and ease of discussion only and are not necessarily endorsed or promoted by the University of California Cooperative Extension.