

Probiotics

A Guide for Patients & Families

What Are Probiotics?

Probiotics are healthy, live bacteria that normally live in your digestive tract (gut). Your intestines contain trillions of these helpful bacteria that work every day to keep you healthy.

Good bacteria help your body by:

- Fighting off harmful bacteria
- Keeping your gut lining strong
- Supporting your immune system
- Making vitamins like Vitamin K and B vitamins
- Producing neurotransmitters

What can disrupt good bacteria?

- Taking antibiotics
- Eating a low-fiber diet

When good bacteria are reduced, harmful bacteria can multiply — causing symptoms like constipation or diarrhea.

Regulation & Safety

Important Safety Note

People with severely weakened immune systems should speak with their healthcare provider before starting any probiotic.

In the United States, probiotics are regulated like food — not medications. The FDA has not approved them to prevent or treat specific diseases, and there are no official daily requirements.

Possible Side Effects

- Diarrhea, constipation, or gas — often varies by product
- Bloating or gas may occur at first but usually resolves within a few days

- Trying a different brand or strain often helps if side effects persist

Probiotic-Rich Foods

Fermented foods are a natural source of probiotics. Food sources tend to have lower amounts than supplements, and bacterial counts may decrease before you eat them.

Common Probiotic Foods

- Yogurt
- Kefir
- Tempeh
- Sauerkraut
- Kombucha
- Fermented vegetables (in salt)
- Sourdough bread

Well-Tested Yogurt Products (refrigeration required)

Product	Strains	Amount
Activia	Bifidobacterium	1 billion per 100g serving
DanActive (Actimel)	L. bulgaricus, L. casei, S. thermophilus	100 million per serving
Yakult	L. casei Shirota	6.5 billion per 2.7 oz serving
YoPlus	L. bulgaricus, S. thermophilus, B. lactis + inulin	1 billion per serving

Probiotic Supplements

Supplements are regulated more like food than medication. Products vary widely in strains, amounts, and quality. Always check the label for the type and number of bacteria (measured in CFU — Colony Forming Units).

Typical Dose for Children

1–10 billion CFU per day. Ask your healthcare provider what is right for your child.

The table below lists commonly recommended supplements, their bacterial strains, and what they are often used for:

Product	Bacteria & Amount	Common Uses
BioGaia (drops, tablets, lozenges)	L. Reuteri — 0.1–0.2 billion CFU	Infant colic, constipation, diarrhea, anxiety
Align Kids (gummies)	Bacillus coagulans + inulin — 0.5 billion CFU	Healthy gut bacteria, immune support, traveler's diarrhea, IBS
Florajen (gummies)	Bacillus subtilis — 2.5 billion CFU	Immune health, gut health
Nature's Way Primadophilus Kids (chewable)	3 strains: Bifidobacterium & Lactobacillus — 3 billion CFU	Eczema, allergies, diarrhea, immunity, IBS, anxiety
MegaSporeBiotic (gummies)	Bacillus subtilis, coagulans, indicus — 4 billion CFU	Gut microbiome support, immune function, IBS
Florastor Kids	Saccharomyces boulardii — 250 mg	Stomach bugs, rotavirus, C. diff infection, traveler's diarrhea
Culturelle Kids (powder or chewable)	Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG — 1–10 billion CFU	Eczema, antibiotic side effects, traveler's diarrhea, immune support
Aspire (Bio Heal) (powder)	12 strains incl. Saccharomyces boulardii — 26 billion CFU	Gut lining support, inflammation, gut-brain connection, anxiety
Ther-Biotic Complete (Klaire Labs)	12 Lactobacillus & Bifidobacterium strains — 25 billion CFU Dairy/nut/gluten-free. Refrigerate.	Abdominal pain, gut imbalance, immune support, IBS
VSL#3 (powder, refrigerate)	Multiple strains — 450 billion CFU Physician supervision required.	Ulcerative colitis, ileal pouches, IBS

Tips for Choosing a Probiotic

- Match the strain to your need — different bacteria help with different conditions
- Check the CFU count — more is not always better
- Store correctly — some require refrigeration
- Give it a few days — mild bloating or gas usually settles
- Ask your provider if you are unsure which product is right