



## Populating the Gut with Friendly Bacteria

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People's bodies are full of microorganisms. Probiotics are live microorganisms, or bacteria, that can deliver potential health benefits when consumed in adequate amounts. Such benefits include: inhibition of the growth of harmful bacteria that cause digestive stress; improved digestion of food and absorption of nutrients and stimulation of the immune system. Each person's mix of bacteria varies and can be crucial to the person's health and well being.

Probiotics for digestive support are supplements that contain "friendly" bacteria that we want in our digestive tract. Bifidobacteria and lactobacilli are important to probiotic bacteria.

Interestingly enough, bifidobacteria can protect your stomach from the possible side effects of some food additives. For example, nitrites (found in many processed meats) are converted within the intestines into harmful nitrosamines, which are associated with an increased risk of stomach cancer. *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, bifidobacteria and vitamin C block production of nitrosamines.

The most popular of the lactobacilli bacteria is *L. acidophilus*. There are many claims for the use of this probiotic; it is best known for reimplanting friendly bacteria into the colon to assure return of bodily functions after a course of antibiotic drugs. The beauty of *L. acidophilus* is that it doesn't require refrigeration. This probiotic is a good

one to take along when you travel, since there's anecdotal evidence that it protects against traveler's diarrhea.

Another way to populate your gut is to eat cultured foods such as yogurt, which contain live active cultures. Cultured foods contain many nutrients in easily assimilated forms. The benefits include: higher protein content than milk; the proteins are in a more digestible form than those found in milk; and the milk proteins in yogurt are fermented into digestible substances that healthfully stimulate the liver, enhance digestion and inhibit the growth of unfriendly

ria count is not very high in these products. In addition, when buying yogurt, be aware that many products have high levels of sweeteners like high fructose corn syrup, sugar or artificial sweetener.

Probiotics must be consumed in adequate doses to do any good. Consumers should choose brands that list the probiotics by name and indicate proper amounts.

Probiotics are great for people who take antibiotics, are under stress or are travelling, but you don't need to be in one of these groups to improve your overall health with these friendly bacteria.



bacteria. Yogurt is considered to be a soured milk product. This predigestion makes it easier for people (even those unable to drink milk) to digest. Yogurt, which sometimes contains *L. bulgaricus* as well, is often used to provide some stimulus to the colon. Consumer beware: in many cases the live bacte-

### Populating the Gut

- Add probiotics slowly to your diet.
- Altering and improving your diet or bowel transit time can improve friendly flora within a few weeks.
- Take 2-3 capsules/day, 30 mins before a meal. The capsule should contain at least 1 billion live units.
- Blend kefir or yogurt in your smoothies
- Eat cultured vegetables such as sauerkraut.
- Eat a diet high in fresh vegetables and fruit and whole grains. Fresh food such as onions, garlic and bananas feed good bacteria.
- Avoid fatty foods and refined sugars, as they alter the intestinal environment.
- B vitamins, especially vitamin B1, folic acid and pantothenic acid, contribute to a healthy intestinal environment.
- Use raw apple cider vinegar in your salad dressings or sip it in water to promote the growth of friendly bacteria.
- Nutritional yeast is a source of protein, vitamins, minerals and acts like a probiotic. Avoid if you have Crohn's disease or have difficulty handling yeast.
- When making a sandwich, use plain yogurt mixed with condiments instead of mayonnaise.

### Recipe for Life: Easy Bake Tomato Risotto

#### Ingredients

- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 - 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup arborio rice
- 19 oz can diced or stewed tomatoes
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 1 tbsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp sea salt and sugar
- 8 cups (150-g) fresh baby spinach

1. Preheat oven to 400F. Pour olive oil in a large, ovenproof saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and stir often until soft.
2. Stir in rice and garlic until coated, then tomatoes. Stir often until liquid is almost absorbed.
3. Stir in broth, seasonings and sugar. Bring to a boil, stirring often.
4. Cover pan and bake in oven until all liquid is absorbed, 30 to 40 minutes. Remove from oven.
5. Stir in spinach. Enjoy with a side of greens.