



## Probiotics

### WHAT IS IT?

Probiotics are living microorganisms from food or supplements that provide health benefits when ingested in sufficient quantities. Among the most commonly-used and best-studied probiotic species are Lactobacillus, Bifidobacterium, the combination product VSL#3, and the yeast Saccharomyces boulardii. Our gastrointestinal tract has “good” bacteria that is carefully balanced in health and can be disrupted by medical conditions, including antibiotics and infections. Probiotics can help maintain or restore the beneficial bacteria.

### WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER TAKING THIS?

Probiotics may be useful for a wide variety of conditions, particularly those involving the gastrointestinal and genitourinary systems. They may be helpful in other conditions as well, such as preventing eczema in susceptible infants and children. Probiotics are generally considered safe, and should be considered whenever antibiotics are used, except in certain circumstances such as severe immune deficiency or during cancer treatment.

If any of the following conditions apply to you, ask your healthcare provider if you should consider probiotics:

- Taking or recently took prescription antibiotics
- Women’s issues, such as recurrent bacterial vaginosis (BV)
- Gastrointestinal issues (infectious diarrhea, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Inflammatory Bowel Disease)
- Pregnancy or breastfeeding to prevent eczema in your child if there is a history of allergy or eczema in the family

### HOW DO I TAKE IT?

Choosing and recommending probiotics can be tricky. While some conditions respond to probiotics regardless of the strains used, others have been shown to respond to very specific strains. Research is very active in this area and many questions remain. Read the product label: some probiotics require refrigeration and others are shelf stable. Some types of probiotics cannot survive transit through the stomach and should be enteric coated. Taking the probiotic with a meal containing a fat may be beneficial to help absorption.

**DOSE:** Specific strains and doses vary depending on condition and should be recommended by your healthcare provider.

### CONCERNS?

Probiotics are generally considered safe, even when used with other medications or supplements. Infants, children, pregnant and nursing mothers can use probiotics. Finding the right strain and dose for optimal health is key and should be discussed with your health care provider.

Caution is advised in people with compromised immune systems as some reports of blood infections have been reported. If you have an allergy to milk, check the label carefully as many products contain milk proteins.

Make sure to ask your health care provider exactly how and when you should take this product.

### My Health Care Provider’s Notes:

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