

Benefits of Probiotics with Antibiotics

Probiotic use is becoming increasingly popular and can provide many benefits to patients, especially those using antibiotics. Probiotics are live, 'good' bacteria that colonize in the gut. The use of antibiotics kills all bacteria including the good bacteria. Probiotics help maintain digestive health, which can be disrupted with prolonged antibiotic use and can lead to antibiotic-associated diarrhea or yeast infections. Probiotics can be taken along with antibiotic treatment and for up

to a couple of weeks after finishing the antibiotic course. Patients taking probiotics along with their antibiotics should take them a couple of hours apart.

Probiotics are also used to maintain digestive health and is often recommended for acute gastroenteritis or diarrhea. Taking a probiotic supplement helps restore the normal flora in the gut and can help reduce the duration of diarrhea especially when used with rehydration therapy.

What should I look for in choosing a probiotic?

With the increasing popularity of probiotics also comes the development and advertisement of different probiotic products. When choosing a probiotic supplement, patients should look at some key items including strains, 'strength,' storage and expiration dates.

Strains

As previously mentioned, probiotics are live, good bacteria and they come in many different strains. Some of the most popular include:

- *Lactobacillus acidophilus*: supports a healthy immune system and is part of normal vaginal flora; is beneficial in reducing yeast infections in women
- *Bifidobacterium lactis*: helps breakdown body waste and aids in absorption of various vitamins and minerals
- *Bifidobacterium longum*: helps to crowd out bad bacteria that cause discomfort and neutralizes everyday toxins in the gut; helps breakdown carbs without excess gas

Strength

Probiotics are measured in colony forming units (CFUs) which measure the amount of bacteria in each supplement. Supplements range in millions to billions of units per serving size. An ideal supplement contains billions of CFUs in order to provide the most coverage and possibility of recolonization with good bacteria.

Storage

Because probiotics are live bacteria, storage of these supplements is very important to maintain stability. Some probiotics are kept in the fridge while others are guaranteed to maintain stability at room temperature for a certain amount of time.

Expiration dates

Because of the importance of storage of probiotic supplements, it is important to keep an eye on expiration dates. Refrigerated supplements are best kept at cooler temperatures but once left out are good for about 4 weeks.

KEY POINTS

- *You can take probiotics WITH antibiotics and for up to 2 weeks after*
- *Take antibiotics and probiotics at least 2 hours apart*
- *Keep an eye on expiration dates and storage*
- *Probiotics provide the most benefit in billions of CFUs*
- *Probiotics are also present in smaller quantities in foods such as yogurts*

Ask the pharmacy staff for available probiotics including refrigerated products!

References:

1. Floch MH, Walker WA. Recommendations for Probiotic Use—2015 Update: Proceedings and Consensus Opinion. *J Clin Gastroenterol.* 2015;49: S69,S73.
2. *Lactobacillus*. In: Micromedex 2.0. Truven Health Analytics, Inc. Greenwood Village, CO. Available at: <http://www.micromedexsolutions.com>. Accessed September 16, 2015.