

A Pharmacist's Guide to Choosing the Right Probiotic



Probiotics are “live microorganisms which when administered in adequate amounts, confer a health benefit on the host”¹

1. The first and most important step in determining what the right probiotic to take is to ask yourself what you are taking it for, and then find the correct **probiotic strain** if any, that has been studied for use to improve your symptoms.

We refer to specific organisms as strains. Each strain will have the group (or genus) name, followed by the species name, followed by the strain name.

Ex:

Bifidobacterium lactis CNCM I-2494

<i>Bifidobacterium</i>	<i>lactis</i>	CNCM I-2494
Genus	Species	Strain

A few common uses of probiotics & their strains include:

Antibiotic-Associated Diarrhea

- **Yeast strains (ex. *Saccharomyces boulardii*)** protect the gut during antibiotic treatments, and won't be killed off by the antibiotics themselves.²
- **Bacterial strains (ex. *Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG*)**, have also proven effective in preventing antibiotic-associated diarrhea.³
- Other effective strains include *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *L. casei GG*, *L. bulgaricus*, *Bifidobacterium bifidum*, *B. longum*, *Enterococcus faecium*, and *Streptococcus thermophilus*.²



IBD – Ulcerative Colitis

- Controlled clinical trials have shown that the strain *Escherichia coli* Nissle, a strain combination called VSL #3 or 'De Simone Formulation', are effective in treating ulcerative colitis when added to standard therapy.⁴
- Other strains will have no effect despite their usefulness in other disorders, so narrowing your search is key here.



Bloating and Gas

- Probiotics are useful in those with **Irritable Bowel Syndrome**.
- *Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG (LGG)* has been proven to provide a significant reduction in symptom severity when taken for bloating, gas and overall abdominal discomfort.⁵



Other

Other strain indications for probiotic use include:

- Colic
- *H. pylori*
- Bacterial vaginosis
- Constipation and functional abdominal pain
- Weight management
- Oral health
- Mood disorders and more!



2. Safety and Dosage

- ✓ In Canada, probiotics are considered natural health products (NHPs). Check to make sure the product label has an NPN (natural product number)!
- ✓ You'll want to make sure the dosage form is convenient for you and your lifestyle. Probiotics come in many forms including capsules, liquids and powders. Choose one that works for you!
- ✓ Ensure you store your probiotics exactly as recommended on the product label to maintain their viability and effectiveness!

If you are confused at any point during your probiotic shopping journey, don't hesitate to ask a pharmacist or other qualified healthcare professional for help!



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References

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