



MYTH BUSTERS

With everyone talking about gut health, it's important to sort fact from fiction. Clinical Dietitian & Nutritionist Jaime Rose Chambers addresses the 5 most common misconceptions she's come across about probiotics & gut health.

1. Not all yoghurt is probiotic

It's often assumed that if you're eating yoghurt, you're consuming probiotics. All yoghurt contains live bacterial cultures added as a starter culture - they are what ferments the milk and converts the lactose to lactic acid that then thickens to make yoghurt. However, only some yoghurts have additional probiotics added to them.

Probiotics are live microorganisms that have proven health benefits when consumed in adequate doses. The way to find a probiotic yoghurt is to check the nutrition panel, it should show at the bottom the probiotic strains at levels of at least 1 billion CFU (colony forming units) per serve.

2. Not all probiotic strains are equal

Probiotics have been shown in scientific research to have positive health benefits on digestion and the immune system, which make them a valuable addition to our diet. They do this by influencing the gut microbiota on their way through the digestive tract.

Probiotics are classified into different strains and although many of them have common features, each strain provides a unique and specific health benefit. Other strain-specific mechanisms include the production of some vitamins and metabolites, fighting harmful bacteria and reinforcing the gut barrier. For this reason, specific strains of probiotics can be recommended or matched for certain health outcomes.



3. You should only use probiotics when you're sick

Probiotics travel through the gut and interact with our gut microbiota but only temporarily colonise there, so in order to get the consistent health benefits, it's recommended to consume probiotics daily.

One of the effects daily probiotics have is improving the body's immune response. Research has shown that regularly consuming probiotics can lower your chances of getting a cold, and if you have a cold, they may help to reduce the severity.

5. Do you need to take a supplement to get probiotic benefits?

You don't need to take a supplement to get probiotic benefits. Probiotics are found in fermented foods like yoghurt, kombucha, sauerkraut, kimchi and pickles.

Then there are probiotic foods, such as Vaalia Probiotic Yoghurt, that have had specific, scientifically tested strains of probiotics selected and added at just the right amounts to help boost our digestion and immunity. To find out if a food contains probiotics, look on the label for "live and active cultures".

4. Are prebiotics the same as probiotics?

No, they're not the same. In a nutshell, probiotics are live microorganisms found in food and supplements that in the appropriate doses, have proven health benefits. Prebiotics are a type of fibre in plant foods that feed the friendly bacteria in the gut.

Probiotics are found in fermented foods like yoghurt, whereas prebiotics are found naturally in foods such as apples, garlic, onion, asparagus, banana and wholegrains like barley and seeds like flaxseed. The two work together and when balanced can help to support a healthy gut microbiota. In short, the 'pre'biotics help the 'pro'biotics grow!

