



Myths & Facts About Probiotics and Yogurt

1 **Myth:** Live and active cultures & probiotics mean the same thing.

Facts:

- ✓ For foods to be considered to have live and active cultures, live microbes must exist in the end product. Naturally fermented foods such as yogurt, sauerkraut, and kimchi are examples of foods that contain live and active cultures. Although, depending on how these products are made and when/if they are pasteurized the microbes may no longer be alive. Some products have claims on their labels that denote the microbes are live and active.
- ✓ Probiotics take live and active cultures a step further: Probiotics are live microorganisms [microbes] that, when administered in adequate amounts, confer a health benefit on the host.¹ Bacteria are classified by genus, species and strain. The benefits of probiotics are strain specific and backed by studies showing a documented health benefit. Not all live and active cultures have been studied and shown to confer a health benefit.

2 **Myth:** All fermented foods contain probiotics.

Fact:

- ✓ Fermented foods may or may not be a source of live microbes and even when they are, not all live microbes found in fermented foods have been identified as probiotics in the existing research.

3 **Myth:** All yogurts contain probiotics.

Fact:

- ✓ Some yogurts (and fermented milks) may contain added probiotic strains, but not all yogurts contain a probiotic.² It is important to check product labels carefully, as not all products on the market that are labeled as 'probiotic' have documented health benefits.^{3,4}

4 **Myth:** Probiotic supplements are the same as probiotics in foods.

Facts:

- ✓ There are several reasons why probiotic foods are the preferred choice for getting probiotic bacteria:
- ✓ Probiotic foods, like dairy products, may help buffer stomach acids and increase the chance that the probiotics will survive passage through the human gut.
- ✓ Fermented dairy products with added probiotics can also be a source of nutrients that support health such as calcium.
- ✓ Probiotic supplements in the form of pills don't usually provide nutrients that some cultures produce during fermentation.



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5 **Myth:** You can't get the gut benefits of yogurt if you're lactose intolerant.

Facts:

- ✓ The live bacteria used to make yogurt, *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus*, produce their own lactase, an enzyme used to break down lactose. Some of the lactose contained in yogurt is broken down by the lactase from the bacteria. Yogurt may be digested more easily than other dairy products by lactose maldigesters and lactose intolerant consumers because it contains less lactose as a result of fermentation and the production of lactase by the cultures found in yogurt. The ability to tolerate lactose is individualized – consult with your healthcare professional before introducing yogurt into your diet.
- ✓ Yogurt contains all nine essential amino acids. Yogurt also may have several micronutrients of interest for bone health, such as calcium, vitamin D and potassium.

6 **Myth:** The sugar content of yogurt outweighs any gut health benefits.

Facts:

- ✓ Most research examining the health benefits of probiotics in yogurt have been conducted on sweetened yogurts/drinks. While excessive sugar consumption can create health problems, the clear weight of scientific evidence shows that the sugar in yogurt products does not reduce the health benefits associated with eating such products.^{5,6}
- ✓ The main sugar of milk is intrinsic lactose which is also the main carbohydrate. Added sugar content in flavored yogurts varies widely.

7 **Myth:** I can cook or bake with probiotic yogurt for a probiotic boost.

Facts:

- ✓ Heat—from cooking or baking—can kill the live and active probiotics; however, probiotic yogurt can be used in dips, dressings, sauces and smoothies for a probiotic boost.
- ✓ Here are some fun recipes that use Activia yogurt: <https://activiaguthealthtoolkit.com/12Months-Recipes.pdf>

8 **Myth:** Probiotics with more colony forming units (CFUs) offer more health benefits.

Fact:

- ✓ Probiotics dosing should be based on science. The best dose is what has been shown in research to offer a health benefit.

9 **Myth:** Probiotics work by colonizing the gut.

Fact:

- ✓ A common misconception is that to be effective a probiotic must impact the composition of your gut microbiota. While probiotics generally do not colonize the gut, many do provide their benefits in the colon, having a beneficial impact on the bacteria already living there.⁵



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10 Myth: All probiotics have the same benefits.

Facts:

- ✓ The health benefits of probiotics are strain specific.
- ✓ Probiotics are defined as live microorganisms which when administered in adequate amounts confer a health benefit on the host.⁷
- ✓ Probiotics must have a studied health benefit.
- ✓ It is important to check product labels carefully, as not all products on the market that are labeled as 'probiotic' have documented health benefits or studied probiotic strains.^{3,8}
- ✓ Note that different strains of the same species may not offer the same or any health benefits. Be sure to choose a probiotic product backed by scientific studies showing it can provide the desired benefit.

11 Myth: The benefits of probiotics are the same for everyone.

Facts:

- ✓ The benefits of probiotics may be specific to the studied population. Therefore, it is important to determine if the probiotic benefit you're looking for was studied in your population, i.e., adult, child, male, female, etc.
- ✓ For example, women have unique nutritional needs as they may experience menstruation, pregnancy, breastfeeding and menopause.
- ✓ Some probiotic foods, such as Activia, help support gut health and can provide some of the nutrients women need as they move through their lifecycle.

12 Myth: The more strains, the better.

Fact:

- ✓ Some studies support the benefits of a single-strain probiotic product, while some studies show that specific blends of probiotic strains have a positive outcome. Simply having lots of strains is not a guarantee of a more beneficial product.⁵