



## PROBIOTICS – WHAT ARE THEY AND CAN THEY MAKE YOUR GUT HEALTHY?

The gut is where our food is digested and absorbed, and it naturally contains lots of bacteria that are important for help us stay healthy. Probiotics are good bacteria, found in food products or supplements, that can help improve the balance and function of the gut bacteria. They can be found in products such as fermented milk drinks, some yogurts and supplements.

### HOW DO THEY WORK?

- They can compete for space and for food that may contain harmful bacteria, evicting these from your gut.
- They can stimulate your immune system to help it to fight infections better.
- A lot of research has been done looking at how specific probiotics may be beneficial and the evidence is growing; -
  - **ANTIBIOTICS** - can change the healthy balance of gut bacteria which can cause diarrhoea. Taking probiotics at the same time as the antibiotic, and for a least one after you have finished the course, seems to help reduce this
  - **TRAVELLING OVERSEAS** - you may get an upset stomach due to a bacterial or viral infection. Again, studies have shown taking certain probiotics the entire time you are away may help to reduce this
  - **CONSTIPATION** – as well as increasing fibre and fluid intake taking a probiotic may help to ease the symptoms
  - **IRRITABLE BOWEL DISEASE** – researchers in general have shown that certain probiotics may help to reduce symptoms especially bloating. You should take them for a 4-week trial and if they don't work try another brand or stop

Not all probiotics work in the same way. Research has shown that different probiotic bacteria have different effects on health and disease which means not all probiotics will help with all symptoms or conditions. As with any supplement you would be best to talk to a PJA nutritionist or your GP about which probiotic is best.

If you are taking a supplement then check it is on the Informed Sport website (<https://www.informed-sport.com>) and has been batch tested. However including probiotic yogurts, drinks (Yakult/Actimel) and foods in your diet will be perfectly safe.

Some other foods you may have heard of that contain probiotics, many of which can be found in your local supermarket, include:

**KEFIR** – Fermented probiotic milk drink    **TEMPEH** – Fermented soya bean

**KIMCHI** – Korean spicy dish    **MISO** – Fermented soya bean