

Probiotics Promising but Not for Everyone

by *Prineet Tung, MD*

In recent years, probiotics have been widely touted as the way to a healthy digestive tract and immune system. Commonly known as good or healthy live bacteria and yeasts, the most common strains are Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium and come in the form of both supplements and through foods with active live cultures like yogurt. Helpful as they sound, they are not for everyone.

Probiotics are a promising field of research and may one day be used to treat or help prevent many disorders. But there's not enough solid evidence to recommend their widespread use.

Larger, longer and better studies are needed to test specific strains for specific conditions and to determine the proper doses and regimens.

Remember they do have physiological effects that may not always be good. Some may, at least in theory, over stimulate the immune system or adversely affect metabolic pathways such as carbohydrate metabolism. If you are immune-compromised, have certain bowel problems or are seriously ill in other ways, avoid probiotics. While probiotics might offer certain benefits for the immune system, they might actually do harm in individuals

with compromised immunity. In this case, probiotics might actually cause infections. If you take drugs that weaken the immune system, such as chemotherapy agents or immune suppressants, or have conditions that suppress your immune function, using probiotics, might do more harm than good.

Just like the case with most other administered foods or drugs, probiotics too can cause allergic reactions in people. Some of the symptoms that can be seen in patients are low blood pressure, throat swelling and itchy rashes. It is recommended that pregnant women, infants and young children use probiotics with caution.

Overall, probiotics are considered safe for healthy people but overuse may cause mild gas and bloating. As always, you are encouraged to talk with your provider about your need for probiotics or other supplements.

Welcome Dr. Millstein!



Joshua Millstein, DO joined Thunderbird Internal Medicine at our Indian School Road location May 2nd. A board certified internist, he has practiced in several Valley locations since 2007 before joining Thunderbird Internal Medicine. Dr. Millstein earned his medical degree at the Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine in Glendale and completed his internship and residency at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in Phoenix.

"It has always been my philosophy to treat patients as if they were members of my own family," he said. "I truly believe it is a privilege to be entrusted with each patient's health."

If you have friends or family in the Southwest Valley looking for a wonderful internist, Dr. Millstein is now accepting new patients!

LOCATIONS

Thunderbird Internal Medicine – Glendale
5620 W. Thunderbird Rd #C-1, #F-1 & #G-2
Glendale, Arizona 85306

Thunderbird Internal Medicine - Phoenix
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