

UN–L for Families
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Live a Healthy Life with Probiotics and Prebiotics

Even though probiotics are bacteria, they can provide health benefits for people reports Julie Albrecht, Ph.D., extension food specialist

Probiotics are microorganisms that are safe for people to consume in adequate amounts. They are good bacteria that help fight harmful bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract. There are active and inactive probiotics in food products. Inactive probiotics are made as dried bacteria that grow only when they reach the moist environment in the body. Active probiotics are in products like yogurt, cultured milk, sauerkraut, sourdough bread, salami, some juices and soy beverages.

There are several benefits from consuming probiotics. They can reduce allergy conditions, cancer risks, the incidence of diarrhea, the risk of stomach ulcers, hypertension, and kidney stones. They also can relieve the symptoms of IBS, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, strengthen the immune system, are good for people with lactose intolerance and help people stay healthy.

Prebiotics are nondigestible food ingredients that selectively stimulate growth of good bacteria in the colon. Some prebiotics even enhance calcium absorption, improve the human immune system and resistance against infections. Consuming prebiotics can cause some mild flatulence, stomach cramps and discomfort in the GI tract because of gas released from fermenting prebiotics. Symptoms usually occur when 14 to 15 grams of prebiotics are consumed per day.

Products with prebiotics will have these on their ingredient labels: inulin, fructooligosaccharides, polydextrose, arabinogalactan, lactulose, and lactic acid.

Some foods with prebiotics include whole grains, onions, bananas, honey, garlic and artichokes. Adding prebiotic ingredients to foods increases the fiber in the product.

For more information on probiotics and prebiotics contact your local University of Nebraska—Lincoln Extension office and ask for NebGuide G 1863 A Healthy

Lifestyle with Probiotics and Prebiotics, or on the web at:

<http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/sendt/g1863.pdf>