

## Don't Worry, it's Good Bacteria



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Since we were little, many of us have been left with the imprint of a fear of germs. "Don't touch that, you'll get germs." "Don't put your hands in your mouth, you'll get germs." "Wash your hands to get rid of the germs."

What are these mysterious germs that caused our parents to raise their voice at us and give us looks of disgust? Germs are microbes, including viruses, bacteria, fungi and other organisms. Sure, some germs can cause disease, for example rhinoviruses and coronaviruses may cause the common cold, but did you know that there are such things as good germs, or good bacteria?

Bacteria are very small, non-compartmentalized microorganisms with circular DNA and ribosomes. Probiotics, the good bacteria, are live bacteria that can be administered to animals or humans to supplement the flora of the gastrointestinal tract and to improve health. The most commonly studied good bacteria are *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and other *Lactobacillus*. The medical benefits of probiotics have been scientifically proven in a number of studies.

#### Healing with good bacteria

Taking probiotics has been shown to improve conditions ranging from diarrhea to respiratory infections in kids. Here are some of the conditions that probiotics are good for:

**Eczema:** In infants allergic to cow's milk, symptoms of eczema improved significantly with one month of treatment with probiotics.

**Diarrhea:** One study showed that the intake of probiotics consistently shortened the diarrhea phase of the rotavirus infection by one day. Another study showed that a combination of two probiotics reduced the duration of diarrhea in babies and children ages 9 to 44 months attending daycare centers. Taking probiotics as early as possible reduced recovery time by 43%.

**Irritable bowel syndrome:** In patients with irritable bowel syndrome, probiotics were shown to improve abdominal pain, bloating, number and quality of stools and general physical well-being.

**Traveler's diarrhea:** A study was conducted on 820 persons traveling to southern Turkey to two destinations. One group received a probiotic and the other received a placebo. People taking the probiotic appeared to have a lower incidence of traveler's diarrhea than people taking the placebo. The researchers concluded that probiotics were effective in reducing the occurrence of traveler's diarrhea with no side effects.