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Share the Wellness Tip

Bacteria Gone Good

For nearly a century, yogurt has been considered a healthy food. In addition to providing calcium and protein, yogurt is often loaded with good bacteria, known as probiotics.

You don't necessarily need probiotics to be healthy. However, these microorganisms may help with digestion and offer protection from harmful bacteria, just as the existing "good" bacteria in your body already do.

A Digestive Aide

In clinical studies, probiotics have been shown to improve digestive problems, such as:

- Diarrhea
- Ulcerative colitis
- Irritable bowel disease
- Constipation
- Food allergies, including lactose intolerance

Research also shows that good bacteria in yogurt may thwart the growth of *Helicobacter pylori*. These bad bacteria can cause ulcers, stomach inflammation and some digestive cancers.

How Does Yogurt Help?

Some experts think that good bacteria improve the balance of helpful and harmful bugs in the digestive tract.

Others think probiotics may steal energy sources from trouble-making germs in the body. A third theory is that bacteria in yogurt may stimulate the body's immune system to fight illness.

Check the Label

When shopping; look for yogurt that has the "Live Active Cultures" seal on the label. This means it probably contains good bacteria, such as *Lactobacillus* or *Bifidobacteria*.

Do you find plain yogurt boring or unpalatable? Try adding fruit or a teaspoon of honey. Consider using yogurt in place of sour cream to make dips or sauces.

Sources: The Mayo Clinic; California Dairy Research Foundation

