

ACTIVIA®

MYTHS & FACTS

1 **MYTH:** Live and active cultures & probiotics mean the same thing.

FACTS:

- ✓ For a food item to boast "live and active cultures," it must contain living microbes right up to the moment it's consumed. This is often the case with naturally fermented foods like yogurt, sauerkraut, and kimchi, which are teeming with these beneficial cultures. However, the journey from production to your plate is crucial. The process of making these foods and any pasteurization they undergo can affect whether these microbes are still kicking. You might notice labels on some products proudly stating the presence of live and active cultures, signalling their microbial vitality.
- ✓ Probiotics are essentially live and active cultures but with a twist. They are specific types of live microorganisms that, when taken in the right amounts regularly, offer health benefits to their host¹. Think of them as friendly bacteria that are not just alive but are chosen for their proven health perks. These benefits are specific to the strain of the bacteria, meaning that not all live cultures are created equal. Probiotics are identified down to their genus, species, and strain, with each one having its unique advantage, supported by scientific research. While many live and active cultures are beneficial, only those that have been rigorously studied and shown to provide health benefits earn the title of probiotics.

2 **MYTH:** All fermented foods contain probiotics.

FACT:

- ✓ Fermented foods, like yogurt and kimchi, can sometimes contain live microbes, which are tiny organisms. However, it's important to note that not every microbe in these foods is a probiotic. Probiotics are specific types of microbes that have been shown through research to provide health benefits. So, while some fermented foods do have live microbes, not all of these are confirmed to be beneficial probiotics.

3 **MYTH:** All yogurts contain probiotics.

FACT:

- ✓ Certain yogurts and fermented milk products might be enriched with added probiotic strains. However, it's crucial to understand that not every yogurt contains probiotics². To ensure you're getting the probiotic benefits, it's essential to examine the product labels closely.^{3,4}

4 **M:** Probiotic supplements are the same as probiotics in foods.

FACTS:

- ✓ Multiple factors make probiotic foods an interesting option for acquiring beneficial probiotic bacteria:
- ✓ Fermented dairy products enriched with probiotics not only offer these beneficial bacteria but also serve as a vital source of essential nutrients like calcium, which plays an important role in overall health.
- ✓ Probiotic foods offer additional nutritional benefits. This is because the fermentation process, which is central to creating these foods, generates nutrients that are not present in pill-based supplements.

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MYTHS & FACTS

5 MYTH: You can't get the gut benefits of yogurt if you're lactose intolerant.

FACTS:

- ✓ Yogurt is made using live bacteria, specifically *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus*. These bacteria are quite remarkable because they produce lactase, an enzyme that breaks down lactose, the sugar found in milk that can cause discomfort for those with lactose intolerance. During the yogurt-making process, some of the lactose in milk is broken down by this enzyme, making yogurt easier to digest for people who usually have trouble with dairy products. This means that yogurt can often be more tolerable for individuals with lactose maldigestion or lactose intolerance, thanks to the reduced lactose content and the presence of lactase from the bacterial cultures.
- ✓ Beyond its digestibility, yogurt is a nutritional powerhouse. Yogurt can also contain several key micronutrients that support bone health, including calcium, vitamin D, and potassium.

6 MYTH: The sugar content of yogurt outweighs any gut health benefits.

FACTS:

- ✓ Most of the studies that look into how good yogurt is for us, especially for our digestive system, have actually been done on yogurts that have added sugar or are sweetened. While it's true that eating a lot of sugar isn't great for our health, the solid evidence from scientific research tells us that the sugar found in yogurt doesn't take away from the benefits of consuming yogurt.^{5,6}
- ✓ Probiotic yogurt is often praised for containing good bacteria, which are beneficial microorganisms that support gut health. The concern about sugar doesn't overshadow these benefits. The main type of sugar in milk, including yogurt, is called lactose. This is a natural sugar that's part of milk's makeup. When it comes to flavoured yogurts, which are the ones that usually have extra sugar added, the amount of this added sugar can vary a lot from one product to another.

7 MYTH: I can cook or bake with probiotic yogurt for a probiotic boost.

FACTS:

- ✓ When you cook or bake with probiotic yogurt, the heat can destroy the beneficial bacteria it contains. Instead, to truly benefit from its probiotic qualities, consider adding it to cold dishes. Probiotic yogurt is perfect for dips, dressings, sauces, and smoothies, where it retains its health benefits.
- ✓ For some creative ways to incorporate Activia yogurt into your meals without cooking, check out these recipes: <https://www.activia.ca/en/recipes/>

8 MYTH: Probiotics with more colony forming units (CFUs) offer more health benefits.

FACT:

- ✓ The effectiveness of probiotics is determined by scientific research, not just the number of CFUs. The ideal dosage is the one proven to provide health benefits.

9 MYTH: Probiotics work by colonizing the gut.

FACT:

- ✓ It's often thought that probiotics need to permanently settle in your gut to support gut health. However, this isn't exactly how they operate. While it's true that probiotics don't usually make a permanent home in your gut, they can still be incredibly beneficial. They work by interacting positively with the bacteria that already reside in your colon, contributing to your gut health without the need to colonize it⁵. This means you can enjoy the benefits of probiotics without them needing to alter the existing balance of your gut microbiota.

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MYTHS & FACTS

10 MYTH: All probiotics have the same benefits.

FACTS:

- ✓ These are beneficial live microorganisms. When taken in the right amounts regularly, they promote health⁷.
- ✓ The positive effects of probiotics are specific to their strain. Different strains, even within the same species, can have varied impacts on health.
- ✓ For a probiotic to be considered effective, its health benefits must be backed by scientific research.
- ✓ It's crucial to read labels attentively.
- ✓ Opt for probiotic products that have scientific evidence supporting their health claims. This ensures you get the benefits you're looking for.

11 MYTH: The benefits of probiotics are the same for everyone.

FACTS:

- ✓ The advantages of probiotics can vary based on the group of people studied. It's crucial to check if the probiotic benefits you're interested in were researched in a group similar to yours, such as adults, children, men, or women.
- ✓ Women, for instance, have distinct nutritional requirements due to phases like menstruation, pregnancy, breastfeeding, and menopause.
- ✓ Certain probiotic products, like Activia, are designed to support digestive health and may also provide essential nutrients needed by women throughout their different life stages

12 MYTH: The more strains, the better.

FACT:

- ✓ The effectiveness of probiotics doesn't solely depend on the number of strains they contain. Research indicates that products with just one strain can be beneficial, and so can specific combinations of strains. However, the mere presence of multiple strains doesn't automatically make a probiotic product superior⁵.

REFERENCES

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