

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PROBIOTIC

Probiotics, stemming from a Greek term that translates to "for life," are essentially beneficial live microorganisms. When taken regularly in the right amounts, they offer health advantages to their host¹. You can find these helpful microbes in various foods and dietary supplements, but not all probiotics are created equal. For a probiotic to be considered effective, it must meet certain criteria, including²:

■ RESEARCHED HEALTH BENEFITS

Every probiotic has proven health benefits, backed by scientific research.

■ SCIENTIFIC NAMING

They are identified using a precise scientific naming system, which classifies them right down to their genus, species, and strain level.

■ VITALITY AT CONSUMPTION

For probiotics to be effective, they need to be alive when you consume them.

■ EFFECTIVE LEVELS

The amount of probiotics you take must be at levels determined by thorough research to bring about health benefits.

■ SAFETY

Above all, probiotics must be safe for consumption, tailored for their intended use without causing harm.

UNDERSTANDING PROBIOTIC LABELS: A GUIDE TO MAKING INFORMED CHOICES

Reading product labels is a crucial step in selecting the right probiotics^{3,4}. Here's how to navigate the options with confidence:

- 1. Verify Scientific Support:** Start by ensuring the probiotic strain is scientifically validated. While this might require a bit of research on your end, organizations like [The International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics \(ISAPP\)](https://isappscience.org/) offer valuable resources to help.
- 2. Identify the Microbe:** Probiotics are categorized by their genus, species, and strain. Recognizing the name of the microbe is key to understanding what you're choosing.

GENUS

BIFIDOBACTERIUM

SPECIES

ANIMALIS

STRAIN

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- 3. Understand Strain Differences:** It's important to know that not all strains of the same species are beneficial. Select a probiotic product that is supported by scientific research, demonstrating its health benefits.
- 4. Follow Consumption Recommendations:** The recommended serving size or dosage and frequency of consumption should be clearly indicated on the product label. Adhering to these guidelines, along with any recommendations from healthcare professionals, is essential for optimal benefits.
- 5. Consider Storage Needs:** Storage requirements vary among probiotic products. While many need to be refrigerated, others do not. Paying attention to storage conditions ensures the probiotics maintain their effectiveness.

REFERENCES

¹ Probiotics in Food Health and Nutritional Properties and Guidelines for Evaluation. FAO. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/3/a0512e/a0512e.pdf>. Accessed December 13, 2021. ² ISAPP position statement on minimum criteria for harmonizing global regulatory approaches for probiotics in foods and supplements. International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP). Available at: <https://isappscience.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/summary-document-probiotics-criteria-ISAPP.pdf>. Accessed February 16, 2022. ³ National Institutes of Health (NIH) Probiotics Fact Sheet for Health Professionals. Available at: <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Probiotics-HealthProfessional/>. Accessed February 20, 2022. ⁴ Probiotic Checklist: making a smart selection. International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP). Published 2019. Available at: <https://isappscience.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Probiotic-Checklist-Infographic.pdf>. Accessed February 16, 2022.

