Wellness REVIEW

Healthy Gut – Healthy Life

The Life-Force in Your Gut

Your gut is where you absorb all the nutrients to power your body, making a healthy digestive system central to your overall health. But did you know that there are close to 2 kg worth of bacteria in your gut? That's literally billions of tiny micro-organisms living and growing in your gut right now – collectively called gut 'microbiota'. These beneficial bacteria encourage healthy digestion and support an efficient immune system, keeping any undesirable bacteria at minimal levels. However, if the numbers of undesirable bacteria begin to outweigh the beneficial bacteria this can lead to digestive symptoms such as constipation, wind and bloating, or immune conditions such as recurrent infections, eczema and allergies. Rebalancing or maintaining a healthy microbiota in your gut can be achieved by supplementing with beneficial bacteria in the form of a 'probiotic'. The term 'probiotic' literally means 'for life' so by looking after your gut microbiota you are looking after your overall health.

Choosing the Right Probiotic

With literally hundreds of probiotic formulas on the market to choose from, how do you know which one will best address your particular health requirements and support your overall wellbeing? Your Practitioner can help you select the most appropriate probiotic for you by keeping the following criteria in mind:

- **The Right Bug for the Job**

Different strains of probiotic bacteria perform very different tasks within the body; therefore it's important to consider 'strain specificity' and select a strain that will be up to the task. For example, *Lactobacillus acidophilus* NCFM® and *Bifidobacterium lactis* Bi-07 are particular strains that have been shown to promote the regrowth of many species of beneficial bacteria within the gut, whilst *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* GG can assist with reducing eczema symptoms and diarrhoea. *Lactobacillus plantarum* 299v is a specific strain researched to treat inflammatory bowel conditions such as medically diagnosed Irritable Bowel Syndrome. By choosing a formula that features probiotic strains and doses based on clinical research you can be confident of getting great results.

- **Stability (There's No Such Thing as a 'Shelf-Stable' Probiotic)**

You may have noticed some probiotic formulas on the shelf at your local pharmacy or health food store rather than in the fridge. Unfortunately, although some strains can withstand higher temperatures for periods of time, being exposed to fluctuating temperatures can activate some of the bacteria in the bottle so that by the time they reach your gut they may no longer be viable and may not give you the therapeutic results you are expecting. Your Practitioner can recommend a probiotic that has been kept at stable temperatures within the fridge, protecting the probiotics and keeping them viable.

- **Quality and Consistency**

When you read the side of a probiotic bottle you expect that the capsule inside will deliver the amount of viable bacteria stated on the label and that the active ingredients will be of the highest quality so the formula will deliver effective results. Your Practitioner can recommend probiotic formulas that are backed by real-time stability testing and microbiology laboratory testing for quality and consistency so you can be confident that your probiotic is of the highest quality and has the stated potency, right up to the expiry date.

More is Not Necessarily Better

You'd be forgiven for thinking that packing as many different probiotic strains into a capsule as possible will give you greater health outcomes. Unfortunately this isn't the case as the number of viable micro-organisms needed to achieve therapeutic doses of each strain simply wouldn't fit into a capsule or would require very large volumes of powder to be taken each dose. When looking at a probiotic your Practitioner will assess whether there are therapeutic levels of each strain present in the formula rather than just a 'token' amount. Contrary to popular belief, single strain formulas or those containing only a few strains do not promote a 'monoculture' of micro-organisms in the gut. Research has shown that strains such as *L. acidophillus* NCFM® and *B. lactis* Bi07 actually facilitate the regrowth of a diverse number of micro-organism colonies by altering the gastrointestinal environment to favour the proliferation of a number of beneficial bacteria, which is what you want for a healthy gut. So it isn't necessary to replace every strain of bacteria to achieve the best microbiota balance required for good health.

Get That Healthy Gut Feeling

Supporting an optimal balance of gut bacteria is key to achieving good digestive function along with overall health and wellbeing. Your Practitioner can advise you on the best probiotic formula to support your overall wellbeing based on your specific health needs, and can recommend high-quality, scientifically validated strains of probiotics. So for a healthy life, support a healthy gut with probiotics.

Talk to your Practitioner today about the right probiotic for you.