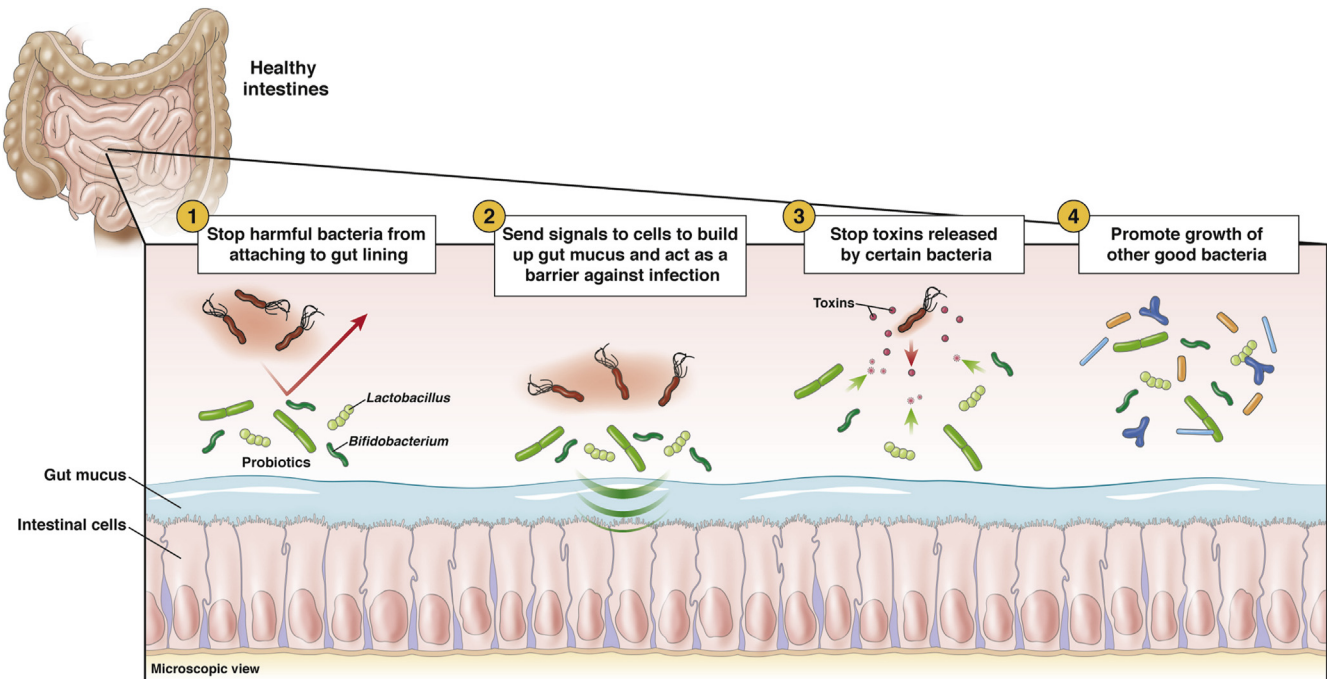


AGA Patient Education Section

Probiotics



What Are Probiotics?

Probiotics are microscopic (extremely small), living organisms that are often bacteria, but can also be organisms, like yeasts. The probiotics currently on the market are foods or dietary supplements and the use of these agents is thought to be beneficial in some situations by altering the intestinal microbiome (the gut's bacterial and yeast contents).

The potential positive effects of probiotics centers on their ability to aid gastrointestinal (GI) health, such as:

- Stopping harmful bacteria from attaching to your gut lining and growing there.
- Sending signals to your cells to build up the mucus in your gut and help it act as a barrier against infection.
- Stopping toxins released by certain bacteria that can make you sick.
- Promoting the growth of other bacteria that can improve your health.

Who Should Take Probiotics?

Probiotics have been around for many years, but experts are still figuring out how they work and for whom they may be the best fit. When it comes to gut health, certain strains of probiotics may help common GI disorders, such as irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, and infectious and antibiotic-related diarrhea.

Choosing the Right Probiotic

Much of the research to date has focused on species and strains of *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* that are thought to have probiotic effects. Each strain may impact the body differently.

Your doctor can help you understand the differences and make the best choice for you, by helping you to read product labels and the facts contained within them.

Learn more in the AGA GI Patient Center at www.gastro.org/practice-guidance/gi-patient-center/topic/probiotics.