

Nutrition Hints

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Hint #868: Antibiotics and the need for probiotics

When antibiotics are prescribed in the countries of continental Europe, probiotics (regarded as medicines) are prescribed alongside them, partly because they help to prevent diarrhea that often accompanies antibiotic treatment.

Probiotics are microbes that can protect you against disease. They are immune-modulating bacteria that have very low virulence compared with the more pathogenic gut flora (such as *Escherichia coli* and clostridia).

Lactobacilli and bifidobacteria are examples of probiotics found in the large intestine. In the US, probiotics are marketed as supplements and are sold over the counter.

Lactobacillus GG can prevent diarrhea and allergies in children. Lactobacilli also produce compounds that act as local antibiotics against more toxic organisms.

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