Grab a Healthy Dose of Probiotics after Weight Loss Surgery

A healthy dose of probiotics—the good bacteria—has been shown to improve weight loss and prevent common side effects after weight loss surgery.

Probiotics are naturally occurring bacteria that live in our gastrointestinal tracts. Often referred to as “friendly” bacteria, they play a large role in our digestion, immunity and the production of vitamin K. These good bacteria. Probiotics help speed weight loss after Bariatric Surgery. They also help our bodies stay healthy by maintaining balance and not allowing the “bad” bacteria to take over.

After bariatric procedures, it is common for this balance to become altered. This is due to the disruption to your GI tract, along with antibiotics taken post surgery to prevent infections. Though antibiotics can ward off harmful bacteria, they also wipe out the good guys. Probiotics, from foods and supplements, can play a role in helping restore this balance.

Several studies have also found that bariatric patients who take probiotics have significantly greater weight loss compared to those in non-probiotics control groups. Though researchers were initially looking just to improve digestive symptoms and overall quality of life, enhanced weight loss outcomes were a surprising side effect.

As a bonus, probiotics can also help to:
• Increase levels of vitamin B12, an important nutrient that is often deficient after gastric bypass surgery
• Decrease the incidence of pouchitis, an intestinal inflammation common after some bariatric surgeries
• Decrease incidence of diarrhea, another side effect of antibiotic use.

Most probiotic supplements include *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium*, two of the most well-studied strains. There are products with more bacterial strains in addition to these. Some experts say it’s a good idea to switch supplements every month or two. Probiotics with at least 20 billion live organisms per dose seem to be the most effective. You can choose among powders, pills, and liquid shots. Some are sold chilled and must be kept that way to maintain their effectiveness. But the success of a product has more to do with the specific microbes it contains than what form it takes.

“Probiotics can improve intestinal function and maintain the integrity of the lining of the intestines,” says Stefano Guandalini, MD, professor of pediatrics and gastroenterology at the University of Chicago Medical Center. These friendly organisms may also help fight bacteria that cause diarrhea. There’s also evidence that probiotics help maintain a strong immune system.
“In societies with very good hygiene, we’ve seen a sharp increase in autoimmune and allergic diseases,” Guandalini tells WebMD. “That may be because the immune system isn’t being properly challenged by pathogenic organisms. Introducing friendly bacteria in the form of probiotics is believed to challenge the immune system in healthy ways.”

Some probiotics contain lactose, so read the label. If you are lactose intolerant, look for a different brand. Below are some recommendations for possible probiotics. Please do your own research to make a decision that is right for you.

**Over-the-Counter Probiotics**

**Align** ($40 for 42 capsules, [drugstore.com](http://drugstore.com)) It contains *Bifantis*, which helps maintain digestive balance.

**Florastor** ($46.50 for 50 capsules, [drugstore.com](http://drugstore.com)) A study found it alleviates antibiotic-related diarrhea and may help aid the immune system, so it's smart to take when traveling.

**RepHresh Pro-B** ($30 for 30 capsules, at drugstores) The only probiotic clinically shown to balance yeast and bacteria daily.

**Dr. Frank Lipman's Be Well Probiotic Powder** ($44 for 60 servings, [bewellbydrfranklipman.com](http://bewellbydrfranklipman.com)) Can be helpful for chronic indigestion and bloating. Add a teaspoon to your smoothie or mix with water.

**Culturelle Digestive Health Probiotic Chewables** ($25.29 for 24 chewable tablets, at drugstores) Has been shown to boost general digestive health.

**VSL #3** – VSL#3 Capsules is a probiotic medical food for the dietary management of Irritable Bowel Syndrome and Ulcerative Colitis consisting of 8 strains of live freeze-dried lactic acid bacteria. VSL #3 Capsules are available in a 60 count bottle. Each 2 capsule serving contains 225 billion live probiotic bacteria (approximately $60 for 60 capsules on [http://www.pureformulas.com](http://www.pureformulas.com)).


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