Intestinal Flora

(Health alert Newsletter - Dr West)

The gut contains over 400 species of micro-organisms that make up what is known as the flora. This intestinal flora weighs over two pounds, is a mini-microcosm within your body, and because of its many functions, is as important as many organs in your body.

Healthy Flora - Healthy Body

You can get most people well by improving the health of intestinal flora and doing nothing else. This is true because the flora plays such a major role in your body. The health of the intestinal flora affects the following major metabolic functions in your body:

- It can control cholesteral levels.
- It can determine whether tumors grow or are suppressed.
- It plays a role in steroid hormone levels.
- It can enhance immune function.
- It can determine if you can digest certain foods, like milk.
- It can help you enjoy good bowel function.
- It can help control the growth of pathogenic (disease causing) organisms within your gut.

The major factors affecting the health of the intestinal flora, and in turn, your health in general, are diet and medications, especially antibiotics.

What is Flora?

Flora is the environment of your gut, harboring millions of microorganisms (bacteria). There are relatively few bacteria in the stomach - between 10 and 100 per ml. The small intestine is a transition zone with increasing numbers of bacteria until the beginning of the colon where luxuriant growth is present. Concentrations of one trillion organisms per ml are common in the colon.

Maintaining a Health Flora

Intestinal flora helps to maintain proper cholesterol levels, produce B vitamins, stop the growth of many harmful organisms, including candida albicans, stop cancer development, and helps you enjoy proper hormonal functions - if it is kept healthy. The main way to keep the flora healthy is to ingest fermented foods, like yogurt, on a regular basis.

Fermented food contain lactic acid-forming bacteria. This was discovered way back in 1908. Today we know the two major friendly bacteria that maintain a healthy flora are bifido- bacterium, formerly called lactobacillus bifidus, and lactobacillus (lactobacillus acidophilus).

Regularly eating fermented foods like yogurt and buttermilk actually feed your

intestinal flora. You especially need these foods before and during antibiotic therapy. A supplement may be necessary at these times.

Remember, your flora is as important as most organs. Provide adequate nourishment for the gut, and your gut will protect you from disease. This is critically important when you are taking antibiotics.

(Above information copied from Health Alert Newsletter-Special Report.)
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