

## Inner Ecology/ Probiotics

This inner eco system has a delicate balance that exists within our bodies. The intricate ecosystem is inhabited by microorganisms that play an important role in keeping us looking young, and feeling healthy and strong. These friendly creatures, lactic bacteria, reside in the digestive tract, strengthen the immune system, and help the body defend against “unfriendly” bacteria and pathogens that cause disease.

Both friendly and unfriendly microorganisms are always present in our bodies, but when we are healthy, the friendly greatly outnumber the unfriendly, keeping our inner ecosystem in harmony. However, many factors weaken our immunity and upset this balance: the chemicals we add to our food and environment, fast food diets, the stress in our daily lives, and the widespread use of medicines, especially antibiotics and hormones. And when the body is in a weakened state, the unfriendly bacteria can multiply quickly, producing symptoms such as headaches, flu, skin rashes, food allergies, and other potentially more serious disorders.

Friendly bacteria (also known as probiotics, “pro life”) are essential to a wide range of bodily functions. They help white blood cells fight disease, they control putrefactive bacteria in the intestines, they provide important nutrients for building the blood, they assist digestion, they protect the intestinal mucosa, they prevent diarrhea and constipation, and they contribute to bowel elimination. They also manufacture important B vitamins and are the most abundant source of vitamin B-12.

Probiotics, acidophilus, and flora are all forms of good bacteria that can be found in supplements, cultured foods, and fermented foods to help assist rebalancing the inner ecology of the body. There are many strains of bacteria that are beneficial and assist in doing various jobs in your body. For example various researchers have learned that children and certain adults can beat allergies by taking the supplement *lactobacillus acidophilus*, the friendly bacteria found in yogurt (and other fermented/cultured foods). To gain the most benefit from all forms of healthy bacteria is to work with a knowledgeable health practitioner to guide your success.

Start with foods like kefir and good probiotic yogurts that are cultured and microbial rich. They contain strains of beneficial yeast and beneficial bacteria (in a symbiotic relationship) with antibiotic like properties. Next try raw fermented vegetables with live probiotics (generally purchased at a health food store, many grocery store “pickled” foods are not live fermented foods and do not have the same value.) Braggs Apple Cider Vinegar and Kombucha are other fermented products to look into for these beneficial strains of probiotics. Or make your own at home, it is easy and fun!

“The Body Ecology Diet” by Donna Gates

“Nourishing Traditions” by Sally Fallon