



Quick Guide to Probiotics for Digestive Health

The following are some commercially available probiotic single-strain or multi-strain products with evidence from human clinical trials (see references) for benefit on overall or individual symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome, which include bloating, distension, abdominal pain, diarrhea and constipation. Notes on the clinical use of probiotics are found below the table.

Use	Probiotic strain(s)	Typical Dose	Key benefit	Product/ Brand/ Country	References
Irritable Bowel Syndrome	Lactobacillus plantarum 299V (DSM 9843)	20 billion CFU daily	Overall symptoms	UltraFlora Intensive Care (Metagenics), US, CA Probex (Metagenics), AU, NZ IBS Support (Ethical Nutrients), AU, NZ Probi (Solgar), EU, UK, US, CA Probi Digestis (Probi AB), SE	1, 2, 3
	Bifidobacterium infantis 35624	1 billion CFU daily	Overall symptoms	Align (Procter & Gamble), US, CA Alflorex (Alimentary Health), IE, UK	4, 5
	Multi-strain combination: L. acidophilus CUL60 (NCIMB 30157) and CUL21 (NCIMB 30156), B. lactis CUL34 (NCIMB 30172) and B. bifidum CUL20 (NCIMB 30153)	12.5 to 25 billion CFU daily	Overall symptoms	ProCare (Viridian Nutrition), UK, EU BioAcidophilus Forte (BioCare), UK, EU UltraBiotic IBS (Bioceuticals), AU, NZ PureBi•Ome G.I. (Pure Encapsulations), US, CA, UK, EU	6
	Escherichia coli DSM 17252	30 drops (providing between 45 to 135 million CFU) daily	Overall symptoms	Symbioflor 2 (SymbioPharm), DE, EU	7, 8, 9



VSL#3 (high-potency, multi-strain combination of 8 probiotics)	450 billion twice daily	Bloating	VSL#3 (Ferring Pharmaceuticals), UK, CA VSL#3 (Sigma-Tau), US	10, 11, 12
Saccharomyces boulardii	10 billion CFU (500 mg) 1-2 times daily	Diarrhea	Saccharomyces (Pure Encapsulations), US, CA, UK, EU Gastro Relief (Ethical Nutrients), AU, NZ UltraFlora Acute Care (Metagenics), US, CA	13, 14, 15, 16
Bacillus coagulans GBI-30, 6086	2 billion CFU once daily	Overall symptoms	Digestive Advantage (Schiff), US	17, 18
Bacillus coagulans MTCC 5856	2 billion CFU once daily	Overall symptoms, diarrhea	Lactobacillus Sporogenes/ LactoSpore® Bacillus coagulans (Pure Encapsulations), US, CA, UK	19
Saccharomyces cerevisiae CNCM I-3856	4 billion CFU (500 mg) once daily	Pain and discomfort	NA	20, 21, 22
Lactobacillus reuteri DSM 17938	100 million CFU 30-minutes after eating twice daily	Constipation	BioGaia Protectis (BioGaia), UK, EU	23, 24, 25
Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG	3 billion CFU twice daily	Children (5-16 years)	Advanced Daily Biotic (Inessa), UK, EU Mother & Baby (Viridian Nutrition), UK, EU	26, 27



***AU** (Australia), **CA** (Canada), **DE** (Germany), **EU** (Europe), **IE** (Ireland), **NZ** (New Zealand), **SE** (Sweden), **UK** (United Kingdom), **US** (United States).

Clinical use of probiotics

Dose: There is a large variation in the effective dose, from tens of millions to almost a trillion CFU (colony forming units, or number of bacteria). This reflects the dose used in the clinical research and is the best guide to ensure efficacy for a product. A higher dose does not always mean a product will be more effective. In fact, there is better evidence for lower-dose products.^{28 29}

Multi vs. single strain: A multi-strain product is not necessarily better than a single-strain product. It has been suggested that a multi-strain probiotic mixture could be more effective due to a broader spectrum of action than that provided by a single strain. However, current research does not conclusively support this. Evidence that a product is effective, such as a positive result from a clinical study, is better proof of efficacy than the number of different bacterial strains it provides.^{30 31}

Clinical response: Currently, the best practice for identifying a clinically effective probiotic is one or more clinical trials showing a positive outcome for a clinical indication. The probiotic strains, dose and duration of a clinical trial can inform use. If there is a poor or no treatment response over the anticipated time to see benefit (typically 4-weeks), it is recommended that you trial a different product to see if it is more effective. Probiotics have shown good evidence of efficacy and low incidence of side-effects, however, the number needed to treat (NNT; i.e. the number of patients that need to be treated for one of them to benefit compared with a control in a clinical trial) is 7.³² Probiotics usually result in a reduction of symptoms in some people, not a resolution in everyone, and response is variable from person to person, product to product.³¹

For more information on the use, safety and benefits of probiotics in conjunction with dietary and lifestyle changes for better digestive health, see The Digestive Health Solution book (www.TheDigestiveHealthSolution.com).

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