

Probiotics keep kids healthy

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Breaking news:

Bacteria help kids stay healthy. In a study published this month in the Journal of Pediatrics, scientist found that daily probiotics help toddlers avoid certain infections. Re-searchers enrolled 300 children, ages 6 months to 36 months, in day care centers in a double-blinded study. Half of the children received placebos and half received -probiotics.

For the children who received probiotics, it was found that there was a reduction in frequency and duration of diarrhea episodes. And surprisingly, there was also a reduction in respiratory tract infections in the children who took probiotics.

The children in the study received the probiotic Lactobacillus reuteri daily for three months. In addition to the already-mentioned health benefits, the study found a reduction in the number of doctor visits, antibiotic use, absenteeism from day school and parental absenteeism from work.

So what is this miracle drug? Probiotics are live microorganisms numbering over 100 trillion, including over 500 bacterial species, which normally reside in the human intestinal tract. These microorganisms help in digestion, provide the body with nutrients, help the immune system and help keep harmful micro-organisms in check.

Common probiotics are Lactobacillus bulgaris, Streptococcus thermophiles, Lactobacillus acidophilus and easel, and Bifidobacteria. One can maintain a healthy balance of these "good bacteria" in the body by taking products which contain live and active cultures of these bacteria. These can include the pill and liquid probiotic supplements, as well as foods such as yogurt, and fermented foods such as brewer's yeast, sauerkraut or micro algae.

If you need additional nondairy yogurt options, yogurts made from rice, soy and coconut milk are available on the market. Some of these can contain added probiotics that provide the same benefits as regular yogurt. To ensure that you are get-ting the benefit of the probiotics in the foods that you are eating, pie' those that state "live active cultures" on label.