

News from Northside Family Medicine!




Tip of the Month-

Did you know that you could lose up to 15 pounds in a year if you just stopped drinking the equivalent of one can of soda a day?

Saturday appointments help keep some out of the emergency room or urgent care!

We want to thank you for using Saturday appointments. We have tried to accomodate people who call on the same day or those who are scheduling online up to 1 hour before the appointment time. While we can't guarantee same day appointments like on weekdays, we will do our best to accomodate you.

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first make sure you are familiar and

So are probiotics the latest and greatest thing for.....?

What is a probiotic?

A probiotic is “a live microorganism that when administered in adequate amounts confer a health benefit on the host.” In other words it is a bacteria or yeast that is given in live form to someone in hopes of causing it to grow in the gut to protect you from some sort of medical issue. For years, it has just been yogurt (provided it has live cultures and has bacteria that can survive the acidic environment of the stomach) and lactobacilli acidophilus that have been the mainstays of probiotics. However, lately you have seen other things on the market such as Activia the new yogurt that is supposed to make you more “regular and strengthen your immune system.”

Source- American J. Clinical Nutrition 6/06 Vol.83 No. 6 1256-1264

Things to keep in mind about probiotics and supplements in general?

Most studies are small making it difficult to make definitive conclusions about their true effectiveness and legitimacy. Furthermore, the studies all contain different probiotic strains and combinations of bacterial strains making it difficult to say if one probiotic worked or didn't work they will all work or not work. Quality particularly, of probiotics is important as they contain live bacteria and yeast and in order for them to work they need to be live- so using a good source is critical.

What about probiotics for kids?

One study of 326 children (a study funded by the people who made the probiotics) did find a 50-73% reduction in colds in kids taking probiotics containing either L. acidophilus NCFM and Bifidobacterium animalis or both for 6 months.
<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/news/pages/Probiotics-Prevent-Cold-Symptoms.aspx?nfstatus=401&nftoken=00000000-0000-0000-0000->

agree with our online consent form at www.northsidefammed.com!

Probiotics Continued

How long should I take them?

Studies suggest the growth of the bacteria in the gut from the probiotics will only last for 1 week or so after stopping them. So, in order to keep a good amount you should consider daily use or at least every other day to keep the bacterial levels in the gut high enough to do something beneficial.

Who can use probiotics and how safe are probiotics?

In healthy individuals, it would be extremely unlikely for probiotics to cause problems but there are some very rare reports of problems with infections potentially caused by probiotics that could even be fatal. Remember, the studies are still not overwhelming to support their safety or effectiveness overall but probiotics do show promise and use at your own risk is not an unreasonable idea if you have no major medical problems especially if any immune issues.

Which ones should I use and which should I avoid?

[00000000000&nfstatusdescription=ERROR%3a+No+local+token](#). Further studies have seen a modest reduction of risk of diarrhea from antibiotics use when used before being on the antibiotics. There has also been some data to speed up improvement of diarrhea symptoms by about a day when the diarrhea is caused by a virus. To date the information for probiotics to treat disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's disease, colic, and constipation, and to prevent common infections and allergy in children- is not sufficient to recommend use for these conditions. (Source December 2010 print issue of *Pediatrics* (published online Nov. 29),

Use of probiotics along with use of Antibiotics-

To date there is some data for both kids and adults that probiotics may decrease the chances of diarrhea and other GI symptoms while on antibiotics if probiotics are taken. However, there is no good data to say it reduces risks of the development of antibiotic resistance or bad bacterial overgrowth especially with Clostridium Difficile. <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/555222> 7 December 2010 print issue of *Pediatrics* (published online Nov. 29)

What are prebiotics?

According to Wikipedia, prebiotics are non-digestible food ingredients that stimulate the growth and/or activity of bacteria in the digestive system in ways claimed to be beneficial to health. Typically, prebiotics are carbohydrates (such as [oligosaccharides](#)), but the definition may include non-carbohydrates. The most prevalent forms of prebiotics are nutritionally classed as [soluble fiber](#). To some extent, many forms of [dietary fiber](#) exhibit some level of prebiotic effect

What about using prebiotics and probiotics in infants?

There are some baby formulas that now contain both prebiotics and probiotics for infants. To date, no benefit has

Activia recently settled a lawsuit and was forced to remove its statements that it is "clinically" and "scientifically proven" in reference to regulating the digestive system. Furthermore, they had to remove references to "immunity" as their claims have not been truly proven to date. Does it mean Activia does nothing- the answer is still unclear and if you are eating yogurt anyway and can absorb the extra cost it may not be a bad idea.

Culturelle, Align and vsl-3 and Good Belly are other common probiotics. Align contains a patented strain of Bifidobacter is only for adults and costs about \$30/mth. Culturelle contains a patented strain of Lactobacillus and is ok for kids as well with 30 packets costing around \$18-\$20. Vsl-3 has 8 different strains of bacteria including several Bifidobacter and several lactobacillus and a streptococcus strain- and has many more bacteria in the packet than the others, so in theory this may be the best but it is the most expensive can cost around \$85 a month!!!! Lastly Good Belly is a juice based or powder based product that has a strain of Lactobacillus as well. It is supposedly ok for

been noted but no harmful effects while used with healthy newborns have been noted either. It should be noted that any potential benefits of probiotics in infant formula are quickly lost when they are stopped. It is hoped that they will help reduce eczema, allergies, asthma and viral diarrhea but again more information is needed.

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/pages/Probiotics-in-Formulas.aspx>

What can probiotics be used for in adults?

There are numerous uses out there that probiotics claim to fix. First and foremost, they claim to help with “regularity” with bowel movements. There are also claims to help with Irritable Bowel Syndrome, diarrhea issues, abdomen pain, and boost the immune system. There is some evidence for these things but again the size and reliability of many of the studies is questionable and given the number of different probiotics available it is hard to say if the probiotic you are using is one that will work .

Who shouldn't use probiotics?

Anyone who has a weakened immune system or use intravenous catheters run risks of increased- infection.

What about pregnancy?

There is some data that suggests that use of probiotics in the third trimester of pregnancy may reduce the risk of allergies and eczema in children especially with families with high risk of allergies and eczema. But, data to prevent allergies and eczema by taking probiotics after being born is not there. It appears that probiotics are safe with pregnancy but again I would urge caution and use at your own risk.

Do probiotics work for Irritable Bowel Syndrome or constipation?

To date, I could find no clear evidence that any work for constipation for sure- and proving it may be difficult so it may

everyone 1 year and older and it is appropriate for vegans and is dairy free. You can find it in the dairy section of most grocery stores and they have many of the same claims with help with GI issues and immune system boosting.

Then there are many other potential sources- many likely cheaper, but again sometimes you get what you pay for. You should do a little research about them and finding good live bacteria (Bifidobacter, Lactobacillus) or yeast (Saccromyces) is a good start.

Upcoming supplements we will highlight- We want your input!!!

In the coming months I would like to highlight several different supplements that are out on the market and examine their benefits and potential risks. Next month we will talk about Vitamin D- and if there is time calcium - they are not just for women any more. By all means if you have one supplement in particular that you are curious about let us know and we will try to provide you with some information about the supplement either via email, on facebook, or in our newsletter. We hope you don't feel as though your opinion doesn't count in your own care- it is the most

be worth a try but no guarantees. For Irritable Bowel Syndrome, it also seems uncertain if it helps but without significant medical problems may be worth a trial of it.

Do probiotics work for protection of the immune system and keep me from getting sick?

The quick answer is a weak maybe but more studies are underway.

What probiotics should I take?

Generally speaking from the reading I have done one of the main concerns is how many live bacteria are actually in the probiotics to help you by the time you take them. The probiotics with the best data include strains from Bifidobacter, Lactobacillus, and Saccromyces. VSL-3 takes significant steps at least to try to make sure the bacteria are stored properly and kept in a refrigerated environment until they get to the consumer. Based on what their website said they should work for up to a week fairly well after taking out of refrigeration but other studies have brought up the same concern and testing has shown much lower numbers of bacteria than expected in testing. So keeping them sealed, in a cool environment at the least, in low humidity and in the dark is the best approach.

What about just using yogurt rather than a probiotic?

While yogurt can contain many similar or even the same good bacteria, it should be noted that if you take a good probiotic it contains more than 50x the amount of bacteria that you would find in regular yogurt.

More newsletters are on the way you can access old newsletters on our website!

This is our Ninth newsletter and we are trying to touch on important topics for lots of our patients. You can go to www.northsidefammed.com and on the "News from Northside Family Medicine" tab. There you will find the other

important factor and if you don't believe what we think then the chances are you won't do it anyway. So please use us to advance your information about your health but ultimately the choice is always yours. Thanks again for your trust.

Online scheduling and same day appointments are great benefits at Northside Family Medicine.

Many of our patients are already taking advantage of online scheduling. If you forget to call during office hours or run into a problem in the middle of the night and want to make sure you get an appointment the next day you can schedule it online. Even if an appointment isn't available online just call us after 830AM and before 3PM on a normal business day during the week and we'll get you in that day. Any time of the day just go to our website www.northsidefammed.com and follow the easy instructions to schedule online any time.

newsletters there to catch up on. Please let us know if you have other thoughts or things you would like to include in future newsletters especially if you have ideas about a supplement or another topic to address. We'd love to hear from you!

The greatest compliment you could ever give us is the referral of your family and friends. We thank you for your trust. Northside Family Medicine

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from ac- up to 4/15/10 last 18 months



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