**What Qualifies as a Probiotic**

Probiotics are live microorganisms that, when administered in adequate amounts, confer a health benefit on the host.

### Types of Microbes

Any live microbe, including many different genera, species and strains

### Healthcare Providers and Consumers: What to Look For

Quality product (Bonus: Valid third party verification of product quality)

- Dose no less than that shown to provide health benefit
- On the label:
  - Dose indicated through end of shelf life (not at time of manufacture)
  - What microbial strain(s) is in the product. For example: B. animalis subsp. lactis AB#1

**Genus:** Bifidobacterium  
**Species:** animalis  
**Subspecies:** lactis  
**Strain:** AB#1

*not all probiotics require a subspecies designation

### Regulations Category

Probiotics can range across diverse regulatory categories, e.g.:

- Foods  
- Dietary supplements  
- Infant formula  
- Medical foods  
- Drugs/live biotherapeutic agents  
- Medical devices  
- Animal feed

### Route of Administration

Any route of administration, e.g.:

- Oral, nasal  
- Topical (skin) treatments  
- Intravaginal instillations  
- Rectal infusions

### Target Host

Humans  
Animals, e.g.:  
- Companion: dogs, cats, horses  
- Production: cows, chickens, honeybees, fish  
Plants, e.g.:
- Trees, grass, crops

### Target Site of Host

Any target site on any host that leads to a beneficial health effect, e.g.:
- Digestive tract, urogenital tract, skin, heart, endocrine system, or oral cavity; roots or leaves

### Scientific Credentials

- Adequate evidence in target host demonstrating health benefit. The evidence must align with any claim made, including comparable study population, study outcomes and the study dose.
- Safe for intended use
- High quality genome sequence
- Assigned to current taxonomic group
- Deposited in international culture collection

### Health Benefit

A wide array of preventive and therapeutic endpoints are possible health benefit targets for probiotics. However, although live microbes have many uses, not all are health benefits. For example, the following are not considered health benefits in the context of probiotics:

- Environmental uses such as detoxification or pathogen removal/inhibition
- Improving beauty or odor
- Industrial use to produce endproducts
- Improving nutritional properties of foods or feeds

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### Not Probiotic

- Postbiotics, dead microbes, prebiotics
- Undefined consortia of microbes, including those in some fermented foods or in fecal microbial transplant
- Any microbes not meeting stipulated criteria

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