



Probiotics for Oral Health

Probiotics are all the rage for gut health. Can they improve oral health, too?

What are Probiotics?

Likely a term you've already heard from several yogurt commercials, probiotics are essentially good bacteria. We naturally ingest bacteria every day through several sources, which can affect our health.

Historically, probiotics have been promoted as being helpful to rebalance bacteria levels in the gut and have proven useful in doing so for those suffering gut disorders caused by an overabundance of bad bacteria. As probiotics have been so helpful with gut bacteria, researchers are starting to study whether the same good bacteria can also be beneficial for our oral health.

How do Probiotics Work?

Probiotics fight off bad bacteria in several ways:

- The good bacteria takes up residence in places of our bodies where bad bacteria would otherwise live, in turn, reducing the body's immune/inflammation response
- Good bacteria releases antimicrobial substances like organic acids and hydrogen peroxide, which are beneficial when compared to the harmful acids that bad bacteria produce
- Probiotics can help the surrounding environment by balancing the pH level, which may prevent bad bacteria from setting up shop in the body

How Could Probiotics Help Oral Health?

Though research on the effect probiotics have on oral health is ongoing and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has not yet approved oral probiotics for medical use, several studies suggest that probiotics may have oral health benefits:

- **Plaque Reduction/Prevention** – A sticky film found on our teeth known as plaque, which consists of bad bacteria and food particles, breaks down into acid and decays enamel. It has been observed that the bad bacteria that forms plaque is replaced by good bacteria when taking probiotics, thus reducing plaque and harmful acids.
- **Reduce Gum Disease, Inflammation, and Bad Breath** – All caused by bad bacteria, it has been observed that the introduction of probiotics helps reduce symptoms of these conditions by replacing the bad bacteria with the good bacteria.



Where Can I Find Probiotics?

Probiotics occur naturally in many dairy and fermented foods or in dietary supplements.

Foods that naturally contain probiotics are:

- Yogurt
- Kefir
- Cultured cottage cheese
- Buttermilk
- Sauerkraut
- Kombucha

Make sure to discuss probiotics with your doctor before changing your diet or starting any dietary supplements.



For more oral health information, please visit our website at www.bcbsfepdental.com.



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