

Antibiotics and Probiotics

Spring may be just around the corner, but if you are feeling tired, achy, and stuffy, you may be coming down with a cold or the flu. Before you rush to the doctor to request antibiotics for your woes, you may want to think again! Viruses are the most common infections that you and your family acquire, and taking antibiotics unnecessarily for these viral infections will only increase the risk of an antibiotic resistant infection.

But if your doctor does prescribe antibiotics for your infection, you may want to consider adding Lifeway Kefir to your diet to alleviate unwanted side effects. Research has suggested that diarrhea occurs in 5-25% of patients taking antibiotics, typically 2-3 weeks after cessation of the antibiotic treatment.

A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial studied 135 hospital patients taking antibiotics and randomly assigned a 100 g drink containing the probiotic culture *Lactobacillus casei*, also found in Kefir, and several other probiotic strains. The participants consumed the drink twice a day during a course of antibiotics and for one week after the antibiotic course was completed. Patients who consumed the probiotic drink were significantly less likely to have diarrhea than the placebo group, and probiotics reduced the risk of diarrhea by 22%.

Because individuals who are young, old, or immunocompromised may be at a higher risk of becoming hospitalized due to diarrhea, probiotic drinks could offer potential cost savings. "Clearly substantial savings could be made by the routine use of probiotics," the study authors said.

Though it's important to keep clear of antibiotics if you have a virus, rather than a bacterial infection, if you're physician prescribes a course of antibiotics for you illness, consider a prescription of your own in addition: Kefir!



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