

## Summer: Bathing, Picnics and Bacteria

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The sun is shining, the water is warm, and we all want to get out and enjoy it while we can. Because we do so many more diversified activities in the summer, especially outdoors, we bathe and wash more frequently to protect against disease-causing bacteria.

While it's well known that bacteria can harm us, it is also a documented fact that specific species of bacteria are essential to maintaining and restoring health.

The dark-age view of bacteria has caused a surge of antibacterial products from soft soaps and disposable wipes that claim to "wipe-out" germs, to topical antibacterial creams that are, all too often, overused.

What many consumers fail to realize is that fancy, scented, antibacterial cleansers carry a very high price tag – suppression of the immune system.

It's difficult to imagine the same products that are meant to "clean-up" health-depleting bacteria/germs are also "cleaning-up" the good bacteria that protect us from disease.

Several studies and books have been published warning about the dangers of antibiotic resistance – decades before the issues caught public attention. More recently there are concerns even from an FDA advisory review panel regarding the safety of using antibacterial soaps on a daily basis.

The body's ability to protect itself from offending organisms can be enhanced or weakened by a variety of methods; the most important is maintaining an intestinal ecosystem with plenty of health-enhancing bacteria from probiotics.

There are three types of bacteria in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract:

1. Beneficial (friendly, health-enhancing)
2. Pathogenic (hostile, health-depleting)
3. Neutral

In order for our GI tract to protect us from health-depleting organisms, it must ideally contain approximately 85 percent health-enhancing (good) bacteria, and 15 percent health-depleting (bad). During times of illness, antibiotic use, or excessive stress, the percentages are reversed, making us vulnerable to disease.

Why are probiotics important? Because they are essential to a wide-range of bodily functions including, but not limited to:

- Support of white blood cells to fight disease
- Control of putrefactive bacteria in the intestines
- Enhancement of blood structure by providing essential nutrients
- Assists digestion by making it readily available for absorption
- Manufactures vitamin "Bs" including abundant B-12
- Reestablishing intestinal terrain "killed off" by chlorinated water
- Manufacture of natural antibiotics, like acidophilin produced by acidophilus – effective against many types of bacteria, including Streptococcus and Staph.

- Lessening of intestinal stress from food poisoning while also aiding overall digestion
- Improving peristalsis and helps normalize bowel transit time
- Assists in normalizing cholesterol levels, according to studies showing regular use of lactobacillus bacteria

The next time you use that antibacterial hand and body cleanser, remember that you're killing good and bad bacteria. Isn't it better to wash more frequently with hot water and regular soap than to subject our immune system to yet another insult? It's bad enough that we consume animal products that have been fed antibiotics and growth hormones that compromise our defenses, now we're assaulting our bodies by killing some of the army of bacteria that actually protects us.

There are many types of probiotics, those fermented in cows' milk, goat milk and vegetarian. I prefer those in goat milk because it's no secret goat milk is closest to human milk and therefore the body accepts and utilizes it better. However, if you are sensitive to animal products, a vegetarian-based probiotics will still protect you.

The secret is to take probiotics on a regular basis, not only when illness is tapping you on the shoulder.

The following is how and when I recommend supplementation with probiotics:

- When traveling – take approx. 24 billion organisms for 24 hours before air travel to protect against all the re-circulating air in the aircraft full of germs and chemicals. If traveling outside the U.S., continue this amount daily for at least 7 days after your return.
- At the *first sign* of food-poisoning, spoiled food, or gastrointestinal upset, take 24 billion and repeat every hour until symptoms subside. Thereafter, take 24 billion daily for at least 14 days.
- After taking antibiotics, take probiotics for twice the length of time as the initial therapy. The minimum amount for effectiveness to replenish the good bacteria should be 24-30 billion per day.
- At the first sign of cold, flu or illness of any kind, take 24 billion daily.
- Daily as a proactive measure for good health take at least 5 billion.

Remember, *probiotic* means “for life”, these little organisms are your body's arsenal of defense, naturally.

Recommended Reading: *Invisible Illnesses*