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MARCH 2014 ISSUE

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Bacteria



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Nakd Bars...

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Good Bacteria for Tums



We have several different species of 'good bugs' happily living in our tums. The most widely known species *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, or *L. acidophilus* for short, lives in our small intestine. The clue is in the name – *acidophilus* means 'acid loving' in Greek. Species like *Bifidobacteria* are more happy in the large intestine. The large intestine is very different from the small intestine – the acid has been neutralised by secretions from the pancreas, the stuff inside is a good deal less watery as the body absorbs water as your food passes through. There are also a myriad of other beneficial species which like all the other nooks and crannies along the bowel. One individual species will not meet your needs in full. Ideally a product needs to contain several species to be effective.

Almost everybody has heard about probiotics, *acidophilus* or 'friendly bacteria' in some way. You may be aware that they are generally good for your digestive health. You may have been recommended by a friend to take them after antibiotics. You may be aware that live yoghurt contains them.

But did you know that other medications, like painkillers and the pill can disrupt your gut flora? Did you know that researchers can detect disruptions in the gut for two years after you have taken antibiotics? Did you know that there is strong research linking poor gut bacteria to respiratory tract infections? Did you know that poor gut flora in babies and infants can expose them to allergies in later life? Did you know that your friendly bugs are a vital part of your digestion, changing some of the things you eat into nutrients essential for health?

Everybody has several pounds of bacteria in their bowels at anyone particular time. We have what is called a symbiotic relationship with them – we give them a home where they are happy to live and reproduce, at the same time they help us digest our food and form a valuable part of our immune system too.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome This often unpleasant condition can benefit greatly from probiotic supplementation. Sufferers of this condition tend to have lower levels of beneficial bacteria and higher levels of pathogens in the gut with several studies now showing a link between the microflora levels in the gut and IBS symptoms. Probiotics can help reduce IBS symptoms in a few different ways. By putting more 'good' bacteria into the gut, there is less room for bad bacteria to get a hold and multiply and by doing so, the bacteria can help increase the acidic environment of the gut, making it harder for opportunistic bacteria to multiply. The main strain in long term management of IBS is *L. acidophilus*, found in most probiotic supplements but products containing *L. plantarum* can give specific symptomatic relief. In particular, if your symptoms lean *(continued overleaf)*

DEFINING: Manuka Honey

Manuka honey only ever comes from areas of New Zealand which are extensively covered in the Manuka shrub, *Leptospermum Scoparium*. There is nothing new about honey having medicinal properties. The Ancient Egyptians, Chinese, and Mayans all used it, mainly for its antiseptic properties. All honey is antiseptic by virtue of being a concentrated liquid sugar – it dries out bacteria and pus. All honey also contains Hydrogen Peroxide, which is antiseptic. Peroxide, however, is unstable and destroyed by an enzyme in the human body.

What is special about Manuka honey is that it contains a chemical called methylglyoxal and, according to the New Zealand scientists that work on Manuka honey, an as yet unidentified 'synergistic component'. The non-peroxide antibacterial properties of the honey are much more stable, more penetrating, and more effective against bugs than peroxide in normal honey.

Manuka honey can be used to kill the bug (*H.pylori*) which causes some ulcers and hyperacidity. I used it in porridge to keep my son free of tummy bugs when he started nursery. I have lost count of the number of customers who have amazed supposedly open-minded doctors and nurses by clearing up persistent wounds and sores by applying honey. 'You would be better off spreading it on your toast' was a typical remark from a health visitor. In that particular case it healed, within a week, a year long infection of an amputation wound that normal medicine had failed to cure... Many find Manuka useful for stomach problems and immunity.



The total affect of the Manuka is calculated using a scale called UMF (Unique Manuka Factor) which is independently tested by the New Zealand Manuka producers. This ranges from 5+ up to 30+. The higher the number, the greater the antibacterial properties. 5+ is fine for every day use if you don't have anything particularly wrong with you, but you need something between 10+ and 20+ if you are treating a condition.

In August 2013 the Sunday Times commissioned independent research into the strengths of Manuka honey on the market. In New Zealand only 1700 tons is produced every year yet 1800 tons are sold in the UK alone. Clearly something is wrong. Comvita Manuka UMF 10+ tested above the label at UMF 18, but some 'high street brands' had undetectable activity...

The clear message is that when you buying Manuka honey you must look for them letters 'UMF'. This guarantees proof of source AND independent testing. If your Manuka just says 'Active', or it is a glass jar, then it may not be the bargain you think it is!

Probiotics Buying Guide

Look for products which contain at least *L. acidophilus* and *Bifidobacteria*, and avoid single strain products, unless advised. The more strains the better.

Look for acid resistant capsules which guarantee more effectiveness.

Look for products which contain at least 1-2 billion bacteria per capsule. 20-30 bn is a good strength for after antibiotics.

Many capsules are stable at room temperature. Probiotic powders should be used up within a month.

Most probiotic products are free of dairy, gluten and sugar, unlike the 'little pots' from the supermarket. More portable and cost-effective too!

towards the diarrhoea side then every time you run to the toilet you are losing a good proportion of your friendly bugs.

Constipation It is common to just pop out and buy a laxative to get a quick fix and sort the problem, but laxatives can cause a 'lazy bowel' and don't get to the root of the problem. Gut bacteria are responsible for many roles but one major role is regulation of the GI tract and maintaining digestive function. *B. Lactis* is a strain of *Bifidobacteria* that is well researched in the area of improving digestive function. It helps to break down undigested food and produces digestive enzymes. Another benefit of this strain is helping to lubricate the bowel and also to work as a fuel source for the smooth muscle found in the bowel, going some of the way to stimulating peristalsis and helping regularity.

Candida Albicans is found naturally in our gastrointestinal tract, and doesn't have to cause problems if the equilibrium between good and bad bacteria is kept steady. If allowed to thrive then this yeast can take control and cause all sorts of problems from bloating and flatulence to more serious symptoms such as eczema or migraines. A common initial problem is the use of antibiotics. Although effective in killing off harmful bacteria, they can also kill our good bacteria and as a result 'dysbiosis' occurs – an imbalance of good and bad bacteria or fungi in the gut often noticeably resulting in thrush. *Sacchomyces boulardii* can be a great help for *Candida* overgrowth in many ways. Although a yeast itself, it can help in the treatment of *Candida* as it occupies the same binding sites along the gut wall, helping to push out *Candida*. Although beneficial, a multi-probiotic needs to be taken alongside *S. boulardii* as repopulation of the gut bacteria is required, helping to prevent reoccurrence of overgrowth.

Paul, 6 Years at Hanover Healthfoods