
**Abstract**

The concept of using *Lactobacillus* species for disease treatment and prevention as well as health restoration and maintenance is not new. However, in recent times, there has been a renewal of interest in the use of probiotics (as distinct from antibiotics) (also termed biotherapeutic agents), driven in large part by consumers and the lay press. Probiotics have been used therapeutically to modulate immunity, lower cholesterol, treat rheumatoid arthritis, prevent cancer, improve lactose intolerance, and prevent or reduce the effects of atopic dermatitis, Crohn’s disease, diarrhea, and constipation as well as candidiasis and urinary tract infections (UTI).

There is no shortage of *Lactobacillus* products in health food stores in North America and in pharmacies and other distribution sites in Europe and Asia. Questions have been raised about reliability, viable content, and the general quality of many products. However, surely of greater importance is the question of which strains have any scientific evidence supporting their use in humans.

A review of the literature shows that there are hundreds of papers which report, in some shape or form, the use of various *Lactobacillus* strains as probiotic agents. The purpose of this review is to select and examine strains which have been tested thoroughly in vitro and in vivo, have substantial published data behind them, and have been shown to have real potential to maintain intestinal or urogenital health as well as reduce the risk of infection. It is my belief that such rigorous documentation should be required before wider human usage is considered.