

# What is a probiotic?

Normally, the bowels contain many bacteria that keep our immune defenses strong and prevent harmful bacteria from making us sick. These are our “friendly flora”. Sometimes antibiotics or other treatments kill too much of our friendly flora, and this allows infections to occur. A common example is yeast infection. Another is Clostridium difficile colitis. Your doctors may call it “C-Diff”, for short. Another term is “antibiotic-associated colitis”.

ONLY use antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor. Use antibiotic ointments ONLY on cuts or as directed by a doctor. ONLY use anti-bacterial soaps on very dirty hands, or as prescribed by a doctor; plain soap works best for general skin cleansing.

Probiotics are friendly flora to help replace the ones you have lost. There are many kinds and many brands. Yogurt and Kefir (KEH-feer) are common sources of “live cultures” (friendly flora).

**If you have been diagnosed with Clostridium difficile colitis, I recommend taking a kefir along with your doctor’s treatment regimen for 4 months:**

## 1. Kefir – ½ cup three times a day, plus any extra that you wish

Kefir is the best choice. Kefir is a yogurt-like product available in most major grocery chains, like Publix or Winn Dixie. It has 10-20 live types of friendly bacteria + yeast. (Yogurts & most probiotic pills have 1-3 types.) You can buy it plain or flavored. You can also make it with a starter (Chuck’s Natural Market in Temple Terrace carries kefir starter). Kefir is low in lactose, so you can drink it even if you are lactose-intolerant.



More information on each of these products may be found on the internet:

<http://www.greekgodsyogurt.com/kefir-products/plain/>

<http://www.lifeway.net/Probiotics/>

<http://www.yogourmet.com/benefits.php>

2. If you are allergic to dairy, you can take **Florastor™ (Saccharomyces boulardii) 250mg, 1 capsule twice a day. Swallow with liquid, or open & sprinkle on food.**

*Saccharomyces boulardii* is a “cousin” of bread and beer yeasts; it is found on the skins of lychee and mangosteen fruits in Southeast Asia, where people once chewed the skins of these fruit to treat diarrhea. Florastor™ is available without a prescription at Walgreens at the pharmacy window, as well as online at Walgreens.com, CVS.com, Drugstore.com, & other online merchants.



**Make sure to tell your doctor if your diarrhea continues for more than 10 days without improving, or if it returns within one month of taking your treatment.**

**Disclaimer:** Any recommendations are based on medical science and commonly available brands. Feel free to try any other products that have the same ingredients. *Saccharomyces boulardii* is the most important ingredient to look for.

*Best wishes for your good health!*

*Your Infectious Disease Specialist*