

Relationship between Probiotics and Overall Mental Health

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Probiotics help treat irritable bowel syndrome, infectious diarrhea, some skin conditions, and help to improve digestion and regularity overall. Steenbergen and her colleagues recently found that probiotics may actually aid in improving mood. Probiotics were found to be a good mechanism to fight anxiety or depression, or simply make one feel better. This study consisted of 40 people with no history of mood disorders. Half of the participants consumed a powdered probiotic supplement every night for 4 weeks while the other half of the participants took a placebo. Those who consumed the probiotic supplements began to see improvements in their moods; they reported less reactivity to sad moods than those who took the placebos. These results provide the first evidence that the intake of probiotics may help reduce negative thoughts associated with sad mood.

According to a national survey completed in 2013 by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), mood disorders are the third most common cause of hospitalization in the U.S. for adults between the ages 18 to 44. Another fact to consider is that anxiety and depression are among the most common psychiatric disorders and are often comorbid. Anxiety and depression are frequent comorbidities in gut disorders, including inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Individuals with IBD experience 3 times the rate of depression compared with the general population whereby anxiety and depression are estimated to 30% of patients with IBD during periods of remission, and as much as 60%-80% of patients during exacerbation of the disease. Recent insights into the role of micro biota in cognitive and functioning have led to a theory that probiotics could ameliorate or prevent depression ,intensified cognitive reactivity to normal, temporary changes in sad mood is a recognized marker of vulnerability to depression and is considered an important target for interventions.

or The microbiome is likely to have its greatest impact on the brain early in life. John Cryan at the University College Cork in Ireland, studied mice born by caesarean section, which consisted of microbes than mice born vaginally and found that the mice that were born by caesarean section were significantly more anxious and had symptoms of depression. The microbiome is likely to have its greatest impact on the brain early in life. John Cryan at the University College Cork in Ireland, studied mice born by caesarean section, which consisted of microbes than mice born vaginally and found that the mice that were born by caesarean section were significantly more anxious and had symptoms of depression Bifidobacterium longum was found to reduce cortisol levels . Again we find another implication for the benefit of a daily probiotic.

While we could not statistically determine a significant relationship between mood and probiotic intake, there is compelling evidence as seen in Steenbergen and her colleagues and Bushak who reported that probiotics may actually aid in improving mood, and to reduce symptoms of anxiety or depression, respectively. We certainly conclude that more research is needed in this area. Lastly, our results support the complexity of treating mental health symptoms whereby treating the whole person is crucial. It would not be simple enough to suggest the intake of a probiotic, alone, could combat mental health issues. We realize that it requires the interdisciplinary approach including mental health professionals, primary care physicians, and those in the dietetic and nutrition world. Here are several limitations to this study that have had an impact on our findings. He first is the difficulty in measuring general mental health through survey research. We used the DSM-5 Self-Rated Level 1 Cross-Cutting Symptom Measure for Adults. In terms of probiotic, we also asked about the consumption of many foods that contain probiotics such as, Kombucha tea, dark chocolate, miso soup, pickles etc. We believed that people might be ingesting probiotic without knowing they were. Consequently, this added to the question total, which could have been distracting, and we also believe that many participants may not have known some of the food choices.

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