**Understanding “Biotics” Video Script**

**Slide 1**

Prebiotics are crucial for the health of your gut microbiome. Probiotics are one of the most commonly used and doctor recommended therapies for IBS. So, should you take them to manage your IBS symptoms? Let’s find out.

**Slide 2**

In this video we’ll look at prebiotics, probiotics and synbiotics and what the research says about them in relation to IBS.

**Slide 3**

Prebiotics are basically food, or fuel, for your good microbes.  Your microbes use prebiotics to make many compounds that you need for a healthy gut and overall good health. ​Without prebiotics, these good microbes could starve and die off.

​Prebiotics are naturally present in a wide range of plant foods.  They are mostly in the form of soluble fibre, although research is showing that other fibres may have prebiotic potential. Prebiotics are also commonly added to processed foods and dietary supplements.

**Slide 4**

​The current scientific definition of probiotics is, “Live microorganisms that, when administered in adequate amounts, confer a health benefit on the host.”

In other words, probiotics are foods or supplements containing live bacteria and yeasts containing strains and dosages that have been scientifically proven to have an effect on health.

Lots of foods naturally contain live microbes.  But live microbes in traditional fermented foods and beverages like kombucha can't be called probiotics because their exact microbial mix and amounts are not known and/or they haven't been studied for specific health benefits.

**Slide 5**

Synbiotics are a combination of prebiotics and probiotics.

​Currently there are 2 main types of synbiotics:

​Complementary, the most common type for sale and used in clinical trials, contain pre and probiotics that means that work independently for health benefits.

Synergistic means that the pre and probiotics work as a team and the prebiotic is the bacteria's favourite food or helps with the activity of the bacteria.

**Slide 6**

​Probiotics, and sometimes prebiotics and synbiotics, are promoted as an IBS management strategy.  There is evidence that IBS is linked to dysbiosis and also evidence that "biotics" can help an unbalanced gut microbiome, so this seems to make sense.

​However, there are also studies that show no benefits and few studies that actually compare the same factors.  As with anything to do with the gut microbiome, there is still much more to learn.  But this is definitely a space to watch, as new research may bring us closer to a more personalized approach for the health of the gut microbiome.

**Slide 7**

So, should you take biotics for IBS?

At the present time there isn't enough evidence to recommend prebiotic or synbiotic supplements for IBS. It is also interesting to note that prebiotics for one person may not be for another because we all have different microbiomes and different gut microbes to feed.

These recommendations may change with new developments in pre and synbiotic supplements and a better understanding of both the gut microbiome itself and its relationship to IBS. But, for now have a look at how you can add prebiotics into your diet in the Food for Thought section.

​Probiotic supplements are one of the most recommended strategies for IBS, common as a go to for gut health and more researched. So, should you take probiotics for IBS?

**Slide 8**

And the answer is .... it depends and if you want to.

​It's not a very satisfying answer.  But until we know more about the gut microbiome and more and better comparison studies have been done, that's the best answer so far.

It depends on your personality and circumstances.  For example, can you afford probiotics?  What are your expectations?

I don't recommend probiotics as an IBS treatment strategy at this time. But it is a strategy that might work for you. If you think it’s something you’d like to try, make sure you educate yourself about probiotics before you make a decision and then choose your probiotic wisely.​

**Slide 9**

Here are a few things to think about before you make a decision about probiotics.

Probiotics are not a one-size-fits-all solution for digestive problems and you can't just take any probiotic and expect it will help with your particular IBS symptoms. Probiotics for "gut symptoms" or "gut health" may not be specific enough.​

Your gut microbiome is unique. Just because your friend swears by a certain probiotic or studies have shown a positive effect, that doesn't mean that probiotic will help you.

Probiotics stop working if you stop taking them. Generally speaking, probiotics don't recolonize your gut with good bacteria.  They're more like temps that come in to do specific jobs and then they leave the building.

**Slide 10**

Most studies that find probiotics can help with IBS symptoms are short term. So there is evidence probiotics may work initially, but not that they will continue to work long term.

Probiotics can be expensive. Consider if your money would be better spent on other IBS management strategies.​​

Probiotics have been shown to have a mild effect on symptom improvement. Popping a pill seems easier than other IBS management strategies like diet or exercise, but probiotics alone will probably not be enough to manage your symptoms.

**Slide 11**

Probiotics are generally considered to be low risk and this is one of the reasons they're often proscribed. They may or may not help you, but they probably won't hurt you.

​There are some instances where probiotics could increase risk of infection.  If you have a compromised immune system, severe illness or bacterial/fungal infections talk to your doctor before taking probiotics.

​Keep in mind also that probiotics are not regulated like prescription drugs.  It's always best to buy probiotics a reliable source.

Despite the low risk found in studies of probiotics and IBS, there are still some questions. For example, could some people with IBS be hypersensitive to added probiotics?

**Slide 12**

​And last, but certainly not least, diet can have a big impact on your gut microbiome.  In fact, experts say the most powerful and beneficial sources for all your biotic needs are in your kitchen.  Instead of taking supplements, better results could be achieved by eating your "biotics". Scroll down to the Food for Thought section for more info and sources.

A healthy gut microbiome is definitely important to your overall health, but there are many ways you can improve it without relying on prebiotic and probiotic supplements.  Check out Gut Microbiome Health Strategies to find out more.

If you do decide you would like to try probiotics, be sure to watch the accompanying video, Choosing and Using Probiotics for IBS.