**Choosing and Using Probiotics for IBS**

**Slide 1**

At the present time there isn't enough evidence to recommend prebiotic or synbiotic supplements for IBS. But probiotics are often recommended as an IBS management strategy.

If you've decided to trial probiotics as an IBS management strategy, be sure to choose wisely.  You can't just grab any old probiotic off the store shelf and expect it to help with your specific symptoms.

**Slide 2**

So, in this video we’ll go over some things to think about before choosing a probiotic, as well as a couple of online tools to help you choose. We’ll end with some tips for taking probiotics and the importance of tracking their effects.

**Slide 3**

IBS is a complex condition with different subtypes (constipation or diarrhea dominant, mixed or unclassified).  Each subtype can have different microbiome imbalances and symptoms, like gas or bloating. Know what you are trying to treat before you choose your probiotic.

**Slide 4**

Probiotics are known by **genus, species, and strain**: for example, **Lactobacillus acidophilus ABC**. The type of strain is important, because different strains of the same species have been researched to help with certain symptoms of IBS.  Different combinations of strains could also be a factor.

CFUs, or colony forming units, are a unit of measure to estimate the number of bacteria in a sample that can divide and form colonies.  More doesn't mean better when it comes to CFUs and dosage depends more on the condition being treated.  Strains and combination of strains will have a unique clinical dose, so best to follow the suggested dose on the product label.

​Probiotic supplements can come in the form of capsules, tablets, gummies, powders, or liquids.​​

**Slide 5**

Paying more for probiotics doesn't necessarily mean the quality is better, but looking for a deal shouldn't be top of the list when choosing a probiotic.

​Remember that probiotic microbes need to be alive to have health benefits.  If you buy them in store, make sure they are being stored properly and look for products labelled with the number of CFUs at the end of their shelf life and not at the time of manufacture.

​Regulations differ from country to country.  In many places they are considered natural health products and are not as strictly regulated as prescription medicines.  Look for products that have been independently tested.

**Slide 6**

There are some excellent online tools for helping you choose a probiotic that’s right for you. Find links in the Tools to Help You Choose section.

**Slide 7**

Once you’ve done the choosing, there’s also a few things to think about when using your probiotic.

There are possible side effects. You could experience digestive symptoms like gas, bloating or diarrhea. They usually occur when you first start using and generally go away in a few days to a few weeks

It can take 2-3 weeks for probiotics to begin delivering their health benefits and for you to feel the effects, if any.

Consistency is key. Probiotics stop working if you stop taking them, so try taking at the same time every day to create your own habit

Always check the label for specific instructions and take the recommended dose.

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**Slide 8**

Probiotics have a shelf life. They won’t become toxic, but they will lose their health effect.​​

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Probiotics should be considered as a supplement to, rather than a replacement for, conventional therapy for most digestive conditions.

​​If you have specific concerns or questions about taking probiotics for IBS, it's always best to consult with a doctor or a registered dietitian.

It’s also essential to track the effects that you feel the probiotic is having on your IBS symptoms, to find out if it's necessary to continue taking them.

No sense spending time and money on something that isn’t working for you.