

## Probiotics: Superhero Microorganisms for Cats?

**Probiotics are said to improve the body's ability to fight disease and prevent allergies.**

*By Lisa Hanks*

The term “probiotics” refers to several strains of bacteria and yeast that might improve the functioning of the intestine’s microorganisms when given as a dietary supplement.

According to Leah Whipple, VMD, an IVAS-certified acupuncturist from Berwyn, Pa., “Probiotics are the ‘good’ microorganisms the intestinal tract needs to function properly.” By encouraging healthy microorganisms to grow, probiotics are supposed to limit the growth of unhealthy organisms in the intestines.

Commonly seen probiotics include *Lactobacillus acidophilus* (intestinal bacteria), *Saccharomyces boulardii* (a yeast) and *Bifidobacterium bifidum* (intestinal bacteria). You might find some forms of probiotics in a few kinds of yogurt, but a larger variety is found in probiotic supplement mixes.

Probiotics are said to improve the body’s ability to fight disease, prevent allergies, minimize inflammatory bowel disease and optimize digestion. Currently, studies have shown little about the effectiveness of probiotics on cats, but many holistic practitioners state that these little microorganisms can be helpful in particular cases.

Be wary, though. “There is some difference in the intestinal microorganisms in dogs and cats, and also between cats and humans,” Whipple says. Probiotic mixes formulated for one species don’t always work as well for another species. Consult with a veterinarian on whether probiotics are a good choice for your cat.