

Probiotics are live microorganisms (in most cases, bacteria) that are naturally found in the human gastrointestinal tract. They are also called “friendly bacteria” or “good bacteria” because they aid in digestion and do not cause disease. The natural balance of these bacteria can be upset when your child gets a stomach virus or takes antibiotics for an infection, such as an ear infection. This can result in diarrhea and stomach cramping. Replacing the good bacteria with probiotic supplements has been shown to help the intestinal distress, such as diarrhea, go away sooner.

## HOW DO I GIVE PROBIOTIC SUPPLEMENTS TO MY CHILD?

There are many different brands of over-the-counter probiotics such as Culturelle, BioGaia, FloraStor and Lactinex available at pharmacies and health food stores. Most often, the bacteria in these supplements come from two groups, *Lactobacillus* or *Bifidobacterium*.

Probiotics come in many forms, including liquids, chewable tablets, or powder that can be mixed into a small amount of food or drink. When used to treat diarrhea, probiotics should be given twice a day. If your child is on antibiotics, it is important that the probiotics NOT be given at the same time the antibiotics are given. Give the probiotics at least one (1) hour **before** or one (1) hour **after** the antibiotic is given.

As with any medication or vitamin supplement, please read all packaging information and follow instructions.

## CAN I JUST GIVE MY CHILD YOGURT INSTEAD?

Most probiotic supplements contain 10 billion live cells per dose, the amount that has been shown in scientific studies to treat diarrhea. Most yogurts have only about 1 billion live cells of probiotics, so your child would have to eat 10 yogurts to get the same amount as one dose of a supplement! Also, when children have diarrhea from a virus or from an antibiotic, they do not digest milk products well, so yogurt may make the diarrhea worse.

For more information about whether probiotics are right for you and your children, please talk directly with your healthcare provider.

Sources: “Probiotics and Prebiotics in Pediatrics,” *Pediatrics*, Vol 26, No. 6, 2010

Contact your pediatrician’s office for more information  
or to schedule an appointment, 650.498.6500