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[The Health Benefits of Yogurt](#)

Yogurt is one of the most versatile types of food out there

Yogurt has become such an integral part of our diets that we've grown used to taking its beneficial effects for granted, without asking too many questions with regard to its contents or the finer details of its inner workings. For the more yogurt-curious among you, here is a short guide to the many health benefits of this familiar product, which has practically taken over the dairy aisle at most modern supermarkets. Yogurt is of course made from milk, which means that it contains animal proteins (about 9 grams per 6-ounce serving, nutritionists say). It also contains a lot of calcium, vitamin B-2 and B-12, as well as potassium and magnesium. However, the one key component of yogurt which has made the headlines more and more over the past years is something generically known as "probiotics". Experts say probiotics are in fact "friendly bacteria", which occur naturally in the digestive system and many yogurt products contain live strains of these "good bacteria", which studies indicate can help boost the immune system and contribute to the overall health of the digestive tract. There are still not enough studies to turn these assumptions into hard facts, but scientists have many reasons to believe that yogurt with active cultures may help certain gastrointestinal conditions, including constipation, diarrhea, colon cancer and inflammatory bowel disease. The benefits are believed to come from the fact that yogurt changes the microflora in the intestines, as well as the time food takes to go through the bowel. Also, as mentioned before, certain probiotic strains enhance the body's immune system, boost resistance to and recovery from infection, and improve the success of drug therapy. Finally, yogurt contains a lot of calcium and vitamin D, which experts say helps fight the most common type of bone diseases - osteoporosis. "The combination of calcium and vitamin D has a clear skeletal benefit, provided the dose of vitamin D is sufficiently high," explains Jeri Nieves, director of bone density testing at New York's Helen Hayes Hospital. As a result, many of the currently available brands of yogurt with added vitamin D can prove an excellent companion in the fight for the prevention of osteoporosis, particularly for older people. The conclusion is simple: yogurt should not be missing from your diets, and you'll learn to appreciate both its immediate and its long-term benefits.