What is a probiotic enema?

Probiotics are live microorganisms that benefit your body. The human colon is home to billions of beneficial bacteria that play an important and complex role in digestion, immune function, and other bodily processes. Having the correct number and balance of microorganisms in your colon can help to reduce inflammation, improve the absorption of nutrients, and prevent digestive issues, such as gas and bloating.

An enema is a procedure that involves injecting a solution into your rectum to help stimulate a bowel movement. They’re typically done to treat cases of severe constipation.

Probiotic enemas involve injecting a solution containing probiotics through your rectum and into your colon. This type of enema is becoming a popular alternative remedy for weight loss, gut health, immune system support, and some diseases of the digestive tract.
Keep reading to learn more about the research behind this new trend and whether you should try it.

**What are the potential benefits?**

Some people claim that probiotic enemas help to both eliminate harmful bacteria and increase the number of beneficial bacteria in the colon.

While you can consume probiotics orally, using an enema places them directly into your colon. This prevents them from encountering stomach acid, which can kill 60 percent of probiotics.

However, most oral probiotic supplements tend to contain strains, such as *Lactobacillus*, that are more resistant to stomach acid. As well, some manufacturers produce oral probiotics with unique delivery systems that are intended to withstand stomach acid and deliver more of the probiotic to the digestive tract.

Proponents of probiotic enemas claim they offer several health benefits, including:

- increased metabolism
- weight loss
- improved immune system function

They may also play a role in helping to treat digestive conditions, such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or ulcerative colitis (UC). In people without these conditions, probiotics may help to reduce common digestive symptoms, such as:

- diarrhea
- constipation
- bloating
What does the research say?

The concept of probiotics, including their benefits and how to best administer them, is an emerging field of study. While some of the existing research is promising, most studies have been small and inconclusive.

There’s very little research on probiotic enemas. However, there are a few studies that take a look at the use of probiotic enemas to treat UC. For example, a 2011 study found that administering certain strains with an enema, in addition to oral medication, might be beneficial for children with UC.

Keep in mind that the various strains of probiotics behave differently. In addition, everyone has a unique microbiota, which refers to the collection of microorganisms in your body. This means that people likely respond differently to probiotics, based on what’s already in their system.

There haven’t been any studies done that look at the benefits of probiotic enemas for weight loss or metabolism.

Who should get one?

If you have a digestive condition, such as UC or IBS, consider talking to your doctor about probiotic enemas. They can help to recommend specific strains based on your condition and existing research. This is a growing area of research, so they may also be able to give you more information about the latest developments.

Otherwise, there’s no reason to do a probiotic enema. In addition, probiotic supplements aren’t regulated by the FDA. This makes it hard to know what you’re getting, especially if you buy them on the internet.
If you’re interested in trying probiotics, consider starting with some dietary sources, such as:

- yogurt containing live cultures
- miso
- kefir
- sauerkraut
- tempeh

**Are there any risks?**

Enemas administered by a doctor don’t come with many risks. However, doing it at home may cause:

- rectal damage
- intestinal discomfort or pain
- infection
- diarrhea
- kidney failure in older adults
- embolism in very rare cases

Probiotic enemas carry additional risks for people with weakened immune systems, including people who are very young or old. While these bacteria are usually beneficial, they can lead to infections in people with compromised immune systems.

**How to do it**

If you still want to try a probiotic enema, it’s best that you ask your doctor for their recommendation on what probiotic and type of enema kit to use. You also
want to make sure you’re correctly giving yourself an enema. If you’ve never done an enema before, have your doctor walk you through the process.

You’ll need to choose a probiotic that comes in the form of powder in a capsule. Remember, probiotics aren’t regulated, so it’s important to look for a reputable brand. Learn more about how to choose a probiotic supplement.

Once you’re ready, gather your supplies. You’ll need:

- an enema bag and tubing
- distilled water
- a probiotic capsule
- a measuring cup
- water-soluble lubricant
- a large towel

Since things tend to spill, it’s best to perform the enema in a bathtub or on a hard surface, such as a tiled floor, and near a toilet. It’s also easier to have someone help you, if possible.

Once you have all of your supplies assembled, follow these steps:

1. Fully dissolve the contents of a probiotic capsule into a cup of distilled water.
2. Pour the mixture into the enema bag, making sure the tubing is clamped.
3. Hold the bag with the tube end down. Open the clamp for just a moment to release any air bubbles, and then re-clamp.
4. Lubricate the end of the tubing.
5. Hang the bag within reach and lie down on your left side, pulling your knees to your chest.
6. Insert the tube 2 to 3 inches into your rectum. Breathe deeply to help with insertion.
7. Unclamp the tubing and allow the solution to flow into your rectum. Continue taking deep breaths. Watch for the bag to empty, and then re-clamp the tubing.
8. Slowly remove the tubing from your rectum.
9. You may immediately feel like you need to have a bowel movement, which is normal. Move carefully to the toilet. Your enema packaging should have instructions for how long you should hold in the solution before having a bowel movement.

Call your doctor if you notice:

- watery bowel movements for more than a day
- blood in your stool
The bottom line

Probiotic enemas are becoming a popular way to reap the benefits of probiotics. However, there’s very little research surrounding this method, and experts are still trying to fully understand how probiotics affect the body. If you’re interested in trying it, talk to your doctor first to make sure you do it safely. Otherwise, it’s best to stick with probiotics from food sources and oral supplements.