Probiotics are live microorganisms in most cases, bacteria that live in the body and are necessary for health, specifically via their positive impact on digestion and other internal processes. Humans are born with a natural array of these digestive bacteria and you increase and replenish stores by eating naturally fermented foods, including natural yogurt, kefir and sauerkraut. Recent research demonstrates probiotics have other valuable effects over and above aiding digestion. In fact, scientists have shown lactobacillus acts as an anticancer and anti-inflammatory agent, provides immune system support, and functions as a powerful antioxidant booster.

For bodybuilders in particular, probiotics even offer defined exercise-related benefits. According to a study published in Current Microbiology, researchers from Italy have very recently shown probiotics substantially prevent oxidative stress under periods of intense training. The researchers noted intense training, as expected, led to high levels of reactive oxygen metabolites. The results showed, however, that the subjects who received probiotics supplements were protected from oxidative stress. This outcome seemed to occur because of an interaction between probiotic supplementation and exercise, as plasma antioxidant levels rose with exercise. The strong antioxidant activity exerted by the probiotics neutralized the effects of reactive oxygen species.

The evidence shows elevated levels of reactive oxygen species can limit production of nitric oxide (a vasodilator) and lead to vascular dysfunction. Therefore, from a performance perspective, keeping antioxidant stress low may go a long way toward ensuring adequate blood flow to working muscles.

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