

# Probiotics improve immunity

A local study finds that probiotics improve your immunity and digestive health.

A STUDY by Pusat Perubatan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (PPUKM) has revealed that consumption of cultured milk drinks containing *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Lactobacillus paracasei* improves our immunity and overall digestive health.

The one-and-a-half-year research is the first of its kind conducted in Malaysia, using Malaysian research subjects.

It was spearheaded by PPUKM and the research team was led by Principle Investigator and Consultant Physician and Gastroenterologist, Associate Professor Dr Raja Affendi Raja Ali.

Assoc Prof Dr Raja Affendi stated: "The results of this study clearly prove that these two probiotic strains also significantly enhance immune system homeostasis, meaning that the immune system's ability to sustain a favourable balance is maintained."

Three pro-inflammatory markers that relate to chronic inflammatory diseases or even cancers, namely tumour necrosis factor-alpha, Interleukin 6, and Interleukin 8, were examined in detail among the healthy subjects and patients with irritable bowel syndrome.

The researchers found significant reductions in all three markers among the majority of the research subjects.

The research determined that probiotics provided positive benefits to digestive health:

- 96% of research subjects reported improvements in constipation symptoms.
- 45% of research subjects spent less than 10 minutes in the toilet.
- 36% of research subjects experienced less straining when going to toilet.
- 31% of research subjects reported softer stools.

In addition, the researchers found that food digestion time was faster by 33% for those who took the probiotics (normal digestion takes 20-45 hours; in the subjects, it was 5-15 hours).

## Digestive health is a serious issue

The results were announced at the launch of the World Digestive Health Day (WDHD 2018) celebrations on June 30 at Sunway Velocity Mall.

On hand to officiate the launch was Deputy Director General of Health (Public Health), Ministry of Health Malaysia, Datuk Dr Hj Azman Bin Hj Abu Bakar. During his opening speech, he acknowledged the significance of the study's results when taking into

account the dire state of the digestive health of many Malaysians.

Dr Hj Azman said: "The state of the rakyat's digestive health is apparent when looking at the Health Facts 2017 released by the Ministry of Health. It was revealed that diseases of the digestive system were the fourth principal cause of hospitalisation in private hospitals, the seventh principal cause of hospitalisation in MOH hospitals, and the sixth principal cause of deaths recorded in both MOH and private hospitals."

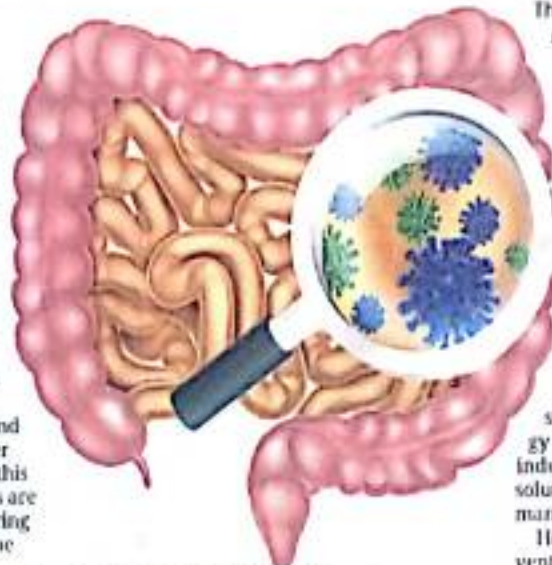
He went on to add that many factors contributed to this, such as colorectal cancer and obesity. "Both the private and government sectors must work together actively in order to successfully tackle this problem. Persistent and focused efforts are necessary if we are to succeed in lowering the incidence of digestive diseases in the future," he said.

He also praised the efforts of the research team in finding ways to delve deeper into the factors that affect the digestive health of Malaysians and their attempts of finding ways to positively affect it.



From left, Rawanman Aron, Project Manager of National Cancer Council (MAMUK), Dr Tee E Siang, President of Nutrition Society of Malaysia & Chairman of Nutrition Month Malaysia 2018, Assoc Prof Dr Raja Affendi, Datuk Dr Hj Azman, Dr Lee Hack Bee, Digestive Health Malaysia Society Committee Member, Puh, and Datuk Dr Muhammad Radzi at the WDHD 2018 launch.

The research revealed that *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Lactobacillus paracasei* improve immunity and overall digestive health — 123rf.com



Datuk Dr Muhammad Radzi Abu Hassan, Chairman of DHM, explained: "It is a lamentable fact that many people ignore their digestive health. Problems with our digestive health can occur at any time in our life, and anyone who suffers from chronically poor digestive health will tell you that their condition would interfere with one's quality of life. "It is our hope that the results of this study is useful in creating greater synergy among the government, academia, industry and the community, thus producing solutions to the poor digestive health that many Malaysians currently face."

He went on to add that taking simple preventive steps can make a big difference and that by taking charge of our digestive health, it is possible to improve our digestive and overall health, well-being and happiness.

Poh Eng Lip, General Manager of VITAGEN, said: "Our corporate vision has always been about encouraging and promoting optimal digestive health amongst the Malaysian public through community education.

"Because of this, we have been, and will continue to be, supportive of programmes that aim to improve the quality of life of our community."

The results of the study were also presented by Assoc Prof Dr Raja Affendi and his research team at a gastroenterology meeting at the International Digestive Disease Forum in Hong Kong earlier this month.

## Public education and empowerment

This year marks the 10th consecutive year that WDHD has been organised by the VITAGEN Healthy Digestion Programme (VITDP). VITDP worked closely with Digestive Health Malaysia Society (DHM) for the event.

DHM is an expert-driven, digestive health body that seeks to empower all Malaysians to manage their digestive health with confidence and optimism, thereby reducing the prevalence of digestive health diseases.

The other expert bodies that collaborated in the WDHD celebrations were Nutrition Month Malaysia, Positive Parenting Programme, and the National Cancer Council.

## SINUSITIS

Have you had the following symptoms?

Test yourself	Yes	No
1. Nose block?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Mucus discharge?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Facial pressure / pain?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Does the pain increase when bending down or leaning forward?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Reduction or loss of smell?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Headache?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Note: if you have answered Yes to either no. 1 or 2, plus any other symptoms, then you are very likely to be suffering from sinusitis.

Sinusitis is the inflammation of the mucosa in nose and sinuses, leading to the accumulation of mucus and gives rise to the above symptoms.

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Visitors to the WDHD 2018 celebrations were treated to many fun, educational activities.