

In a newly published meta-analysis probiotics, specifically lactobacillus and bifidobacterium strains, decreased the length and severity of the common cold in otherwise healthy children and adults.

Probiotics reduce the duration and severity of respiratory tract illness in healthy children and adults

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, respiratory infectious disease results in significant health and economic burden on society with over 20 million school days and adult workdays a year lost to the common cold. Several studies have evaluated the effectiveness of probiotics on the symptoms and incidence of common infectious respiratory diseases.

In a new study published online in the *British Journal of Nutrition*, researchers reviewed research on the effect of probiotics on the duration of acute respiratory tract infections (RTI) in otherwise healthy children and adults.

In this meta-analysis, researchers identified twenty randomized controlled trials of good quality from eight medical and scientific databases. Only studies utilizing lactobacillus and bifidobacterium strains were analyzed. In the included trials, three main outcomes were reported: duration of illness episodes; number of days of illness per person; and absenteeism from day care/school/work.

These results show that when compared to participants that didn't take probiotics, the duration of illness episodes was decreased between one half to one day in those that took probiotics. Subjects that used probiotics also reported significantly fewer days of illness per person and lower absenteeism from day care/school/work than those who had taken a placebo.

This new review provides evidence that probiotics, specifically lactobacillus and bifidobacterium strains, may reduce the duration and severity of respiratory tract illnesses in otherwise healthy children and adults.

King S, Glanville J, Sanders ME, et al. Effectiveness of probiotics on the duration of illness in healthy children and adults who develop common acute respiratory infectious conditions: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Br J Nutr.* 2014 Apr 29:1-14.