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Current guidance
NIH ODS · NCCIH · OWH · Cleveland Clinic

The Probiotic Checklist

Strains, not CFU counts: how to buy a probiotic that has a real job

1 Check the strain names, not the CFU count

Benefits follow strains, not the biggest number

- [ ] A real listing reads genus, species, strain, like **Lactobacillus rhamnosus GR-1**
- [ ] Only a weight or one big number on the label: put the bottle back
- [ ] NIH: a higher CFU count alone does not mean a greater benefit

2 Match the strains to the job you are hiring for

Gut support and flora balance are different jobs

- [ ] Everyday gut support: fermented foods first, then a general formula if you want one
- [ ] Infection symptoms are doctor territory, never a supplement decision
- [ ] Vaginal and urinary flora: look for Lactobacillus strains studied in women

3 Buy by the use-by date, not the manufacture date

Live counts fall while the bottle sits

- [ ] NIH: CFU counts decline over time; at-manufacture counts flatter the product
- [ ] Check storage: some formulas need the fridge; shelf-stable labels say so
- [ ] Choose labels that guarantee the count **through the use-by date**

Keep this page. Brands change their labels; the strain rule and the date rule do not.

4 For flora balance, pick a women's formula

Built on strains studied specifically in women

- [ ] Thorne Women's Daily Probiotic: six strains, 18 billion CFU, shelf stable
- [ ] Thorne's label: do not use while pregnant or nursing
- [ ] One capsule a day; about **$1.30 a day** for a 30-day bottle

THE COACH'S PICK

Thorne Women's Daily Probiotic

Six Lactobacillus-family strains at 18 billion CFU, built for vaginal and urinary flora support. About $1.30 a day.

Shop the bottle →

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