

Probiotics for the Mind

Probiotics are healthy bacteria found in yogurts and other foods. They improve depression, anxiety, concentration, and weight loss.

Healthy bacteria act like tiny factories, producing the neurotransmitters that the brain needs to operate. They balance stress hormones, raise brain growth factors like BDNF, reduce inflammation, and modulate the vagus nerve that connects the mind-and-body.

The Western diet causes unhealthy bacteria to flourish, and those bacteria in turn cause people to crave more fat and sugar. Depression, stress, insomnia, and lack of exercise also disrupt the gut bacteria (the *microbiome*).

Probiotics may also help schizophrenia, addictions, bipolar, and autism.

There are many types of probiotics. On the back are the strains with evidence to improve mental health.

Probiotics work better with prebiotics, which is the food that healthy bacteria need to thrive. Fiber, fruit, vegetables, and nuts serve as prebiotics, and the brands I recommend have prebiotics in them (when taken together, they are called synbiotics). Brands that have good strains for mental health and were tested by independent labs are listed at:

chrisaikenmd.com/supplements

Many yogurts and other foods advertise that they contain probiotics. Learn how to get more pre- and pro-biotics from your diet at:

chrisaikenmd.com/probioticdiet



Storage

Most probiotics are best stored in the fridge but can be kept outside the fridge for up to 2 weeks. However, many brands are labeled “shelf stable” and can be safely kept outside the fridge.

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 6/26/2025

Quick links to recommended products at
www.chrisaikenmd.com/supplements

Probiotics for Mood and Anxiety

Probiotic strain	What they help	Brands (find on Amazon)
Lactobacillus casei Lactobacillus helveticus Lactobacillus brevis Lactobacillus salivarius Lactobacillus lactis Lactobacillus acidophilus Lactobacillus rhamnosus Bifidobacterium longum Bifidobacterium bifidum Bifidobacterium lactis	Depression, stress, ruminative worry, anxiety, and concentration. While all of the strains to the left have work, the ones with the most research behind them are: 1. Lactobacillus casei (alone or in combination) 2. Lactobacillus helveticus with Bifidobacterium longum	Lifted Naturals Mood Boosting (0.38/day) InnovixLabs Mood (\$0.57/day) Garden of Life Mood+ (\$1/day) Life Extension Florassist Mood (0.68/day) ProbioSerene from Dr. Williams also works but is difficult to find.
Lactobacillus rhamnosus LG with Bifidobacterium lactis bb-12	Bipolar mania. These strains can be safely taken with the ones for depression and anxiety above.	Usana probiotic stick, Culturelle Baby Grow and Thrive liquid, and Emergen-C drink contain both strains. Or take Align Daily Immune Support with regular Culturelle.
Lactobacillus rhamnosus	Post-partum depression	Culturelle and others
Bifidobacterium longum	Post traumatic stress	Lifted Naturals Mood Boosting (0.38/day) InnovixLabs Mood (\$0.57/day)
Lactocare zisttakhmir co	Depression with type-2 diabetes	Unknown
Lactobacillus casei	Depression with chronic fatigue syndrome	Restora Probiotic and others
Bifidobacterium longum NCC3001	Depression with irritable bowel syndrome	Various (see options for depression for longum, though NCC3001 form is difficult to find)
<p>The easy choice: Best overall product for price and quality is at www.chrisaikenmd.com/supplements</p>		