**CAN PROBIOTICS BENEFIT ATHLETES**

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Probiotics are defined by the World Health Organization as “live microorganisms that, when administered in adequate amounts, confer a health benefit on the host”1. They are the “good guys”: good bacteria that promote optimal gut health, leading to improved well-being. Sportsmen and women can benefit from introducing probiotics into their diet or supplement regime, particularly if they frequently experience digestive disturbances, recurrent infection or poor recovery. But how?

**HOW PROBIOTICS IMPROVE IMMUNITY**

Improved immunity is arguably the most beneficial effect that probiotics confer to sports people because an infection essentially means no training or worse yet, no competing!

Ever noticed that some very fit people get sick so much more often than the “average joe”? Well this is due to the fact that excessive training puts strain on the body, resulting in the release of stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol and a resultant suppressed immune system7.

Probiotics can help to combat this by strengthening the body’s inherent defences through an increase in the activity of immune cells and proteins housed within the gut8,9 which results in decreased duration and severity of various infections10,11.

**HOW PROBIOTICS IMPROVE EXERCISE RECOVERY**

Physical exercise results in an increase in free radical production2, meaning that levels of circulating free radicals are increased after prolonged exercise.

The aim around recovery nutrition is to return the body to its pre-exercise state. Probiotics can assist this process by improving the absorption of various micro and macro nutrients including antioxidants which have the ability to counteract the effects of free radicals.

Probiotics also improve absorption of amino acids, the building blocks of proteins, which play an important role in repairing muscles3,4. With improved protein absorption, you would need to consume a smaller amount of protein to experience the same benefits as somebody not taking in the probiotics which offers a financial benefit5. Of particular interest is the fact that studies are showing probiotics to improve leucine absorption by 23% 6. Leucine is a branched chain amino acid well known for its beneficial effects in protein synthesis.

**HOW PROBIOTICS PREVENT DIGESTIVE COMPLAINTS**

Gut health and probiotics are synonymous, so as you may imagine, probiotics can prevent those very uncomfortable and urgent “toilet breaks” during exercise.

This condition is referred to as “leaky gut syndrome” and is often experienced by endurance athletes, particularly runners. Not only can it cause a lot of discomfort for an athlete, but it may also mean a significant increase in your race time.

Leaky gut, occurs because cells lining the intestinal walls pull apart during exercise, causing a leak into the bloodstream. Probiotics put into place various mechanisms which help to significantly reduce the chance of leakage occurring by reinforcing the intestinal wall, reducing the likelihood of GI distress during exercise11,12.

**CONCLUSION**

While live bacteria may not be the most obvious sports supplement to pop to mind, it may be one of the most helpful, especially if you are prone to infection or tummy complaints.

**WHERE DOES FUTURELIFE® FIT IN?**

Each box of FUTURELIFE® Bran Flakes with Probiotic Sachets comes with a pack of 10 individually wrapped sachets of HOWARU® Premium Probiotics. This is a blend of clinically studied probiotics that has been scientifically formulated to contain two of the most beneficial probiotic strains, namely L. acidophilus NCFM® and B. lactis HN019™.

For a better understanding of probiotic functions as well as FUTURELIFE® Bran Flakes with Probiotic Sachets: www.futurelife.co.za



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