Can A Specific Probiotic Strain Make You More Patient & Loving?

The field of “psycho-biotics” is taking off. Don’t get left in the dust.

September 25, 2022 By Mike Barr

It was Dr. William Davis’ new book, "Super Gut," that grabbed my attention most recently. I highly recommend it but will also summarize/bullet my favorite parts of it here over the next few weeks.

He first landed on my radar with his 2011 best seller, “Wheat Belly,” and even more so when his 2017 book "Undoctored" was released.

Here was a successful cardiologist who, after realizing that all the stents and triple by-passes, exercise regimens and low fat/low cholesterol diets he had been taught to dispense (and profit handsomely from-- both he and his institution) were doing absolutely nothing to help his patients to thrive, turned his back on the Academy and decided to do his own independent digging into causation— and to what really creates health.

Nothing against my own (mostly) cracker jack HCPs of the ’80’s and ’90’s (we can talk about the Ambien and benzos for life, the syphilis misdiagnoses, the promiscuous use of broad spectrum antibiotics another day), but I had just spent several years negotiating medical care (i.e., mostly fighting with lazy, blinkered physicians and their brain washed (or brain starved) agents, and later, assisted living administrators) for my senior citizen parents and came to the unfortunate conclusion that the longer we can keep ourselves out of the U.S. healthcare system (especially after the consolidation and corporatization wave of the aughts) the better. Mary Baker Eddy, I find myself driven into your arms!

Longtime probiotic takers will likely not be surprised, but just this one species alone-- *Lactobaccilus reuteri*-- one of the two strains in Metagenics’ UltraFlora, has been reported to help with wrinkles/skin tone, sleep, mood and feelings of empathy! Even to help with unintentional weight gain and bone loss. The mood effects are attributed to its effect on oxytocin release in the brain. (Some key references below.)

Restoring L. reuteri, a microbe lost by modern societies, triggers release of oxytocin from the brain, and with it, a

surge in empathy.

A guy from Vancouver, Canada wrote in of his experience after following Dr. Davis' recipe (contents of 1 BioGaia capsule, or 10 tablets (he likes this particular DSM 17938 L. reuteri strain, presumably because it has the most research behind it) + 2 Tbsp of inulin powder + 1 quart of grass-fed, organic Half & Half (make a slurry first to prevent clumping of the pre-biotic powder) x 36 hours' fermentation @ 97-100 degrees F) for making homemade "yogurt"— both to boost CFU counts as well as to eliminate the need to keep buying commercial probiotics:

> I've been eating a half cup of L. reuteri yogurt daily for about a month now. Prior to this, I typically slept in one- to two-hour segments, awake for hours during those short segments of sleep during the night. For the past week I have been able to go to bed earlier and sleep through the night, getting five to seven hours of uninterrupted sleep for the time time since my husband died four years ago. I feel so rested and energized. It also seems to help in reducing inflammation, as pain in my hip and shoulder joints no longer wakes me. Amazingly too, my thoughts toward other people have seemed to shift. The best way I can describe it is that I am more accepting (empathetic?) of others' perspectives. Anger, annoyance, and feelings of negative judgments are no longer present. This is a terrific and welcome improvement in my ability to interact with people. I would call the benefit a higher form of sociability.".

And this woman from New Mexico:

> "I've been eating a half cup of L. reuteri yogurt with blueberries or raspberries and walnuts (sweetened with a monk fruit sweetener) almost everyday for the past year. During the flu season, I co-ferment L. reuteri with L. casei (Shirota strain). The wrinkles around my eye area are definitely diminished. My skin has a smoother texture overall. I have incredibly sound sleep and dreams with total recall upon rising. Bowel frequency has improved as well."

My big question is whether the 2 billion (or even 50 billion) CFU counts of commercially available products are sufficient to produce/realize these effects, or if one needs to either take more than the recommended dose-- or go the home fermentation route of Dr. Davis. (His team's flow cytometric methods counted an average of 200 and 260 billion CFUs in the recommended 1/2 cup daily intake of his 36-hour fermented L. reuteri "yogurt.")

Should you decide to try this, know that the temperature range for *L. reuteri* growth is quite a bit lower than that for most other strains (and many yogurt machines): 97-100 F. And apparently temps >109/100 will kill it! A machine that allows pre-set temps or even possibly a jerry-rigged Instant Pot or other slow cooker (place small towel, trivet or marbles/pebbles beneath receptacle) with a yogurt setting are likely to work best.

Animal experiments at MIT found that elderly mice fed L. reuteri regularly experienced thicker fur, increased dermal collagen, and “preservation of mating behavior.”

While Dr. Davis is keen on home fermentation, for those who can afford to purchase what would likely be 30 to 50 CFUs daily of L. reuteri or other species/strains of interest (the L. helveticus + B. longum is a popular duo for its mood lifting, anxiolytic effects), this part of the program might be skipped.

Stay tuned for more details on that, should you be interested. And feel free to share your experiences (and sourcing ideas). And also please feel free to ask me for more details on, especially, how gut health relates to pretty much all arthritises and even if seems the development of osteoporosis (and/or allergies, anxiety and sleep issues/insomnia). I find it absolutely fascinating. But then you probably know that by now.

If you’re a research nerd like me, here are some of the most interesting papers cited in Dr. Davis’ book (I can get full text reprints of most of these; just ask):

Role of Lactobacillus reuteri in Human Health and Diseases (2018)

Microbes and Oxytocin: Benefits for Host Physiology and Behavior (2016)

Probiotic Bacteria Induce a ‘Glow of Health’ (2013)

Microbial lysate upregulates host oxytocin (2017)

Two birds with one stone: possible dual-role of oxytocin in the treatment of diabetes and osteoporosis (2015)

Lactobacillus reuteri reduces bone loss in older women with low bone mineral density: a randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind, clinical trial (2018)

Microbial reprogramming inhibits Western diet-associated obesity (2013)

This area of research has absolutely exploded over the past few years, so I should be able to find more recent research that has built on these earlier reports. Again, stay tuned.

Mike Barr is a functional medicine practitioner and herbalist with outposts in NYC, NJ and PA. Reach out to him at his Wellevate platform, that offers 25% across the board discounts on professional grade supplements as well as at-home DIY functional medicine stool and urine testing, or at his websites Park Avenue Holistic and Root Resolution Health.

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