

By Temma Ehrenfeld

THERE'S A WAR GOING on in your gut, and your overall health could be the ultimate loser.

Some 1,000 species of microflora are competing for space, mainly in the intestines. Changes in modern lifestyle, such as better hygiene, antibiotics, and a meatier diet, are altering the delicate gut

syndrome, diabetes, and obesity. (You may have also heard of it as the villain in ulcers in some people.)

A good deal of science suggests that an intestinal imbalance negatively affects overall immunity, which may explain why the list of diseases apparently influenced by intestinal balance keeps growing, now including some types of cancer.

Jeremy Nicholson, head of the biomolecular medicine department at Imperial College London, has even proposed that it affects brain chemistry and has something to do with attention deficit disorder and autism.

"Almost every sort of disease has a gut-bug connection somewhere. It's quite remarkable," he told *Scientific American*.

Then there's the rise in the population with celiac disease, an auto-immune reaction to gluten — a major protein in wheat, rye, and barley. Celiac cases have doubled in the United States in the last 17 years. Although celiac is partly a genetic weakness, this rapid growth is "too quick to be explained by genetic changes," which occur slowly, Alessio Fassano, director of the Center for Celiac Research at the University of Maryland, tells Newsmax.

He believes changes in gut flora are activating the weakness in patients who would not have symptoms otherwise. In each case, the argument goes,

Gut Issues

They're unpleasant and pervasive, these stomach irritants. Many experts are now recommending the use of probiotics — the "friendly flora" — to still the war that roils our bellies.

balance, resulting in a host of new diseases, many scientists say.

Adding probiotics, or "friendly flora," to your diet is one way experts suggest to restore some order among these unruly microorganisms.

Take the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori* (or *H. pylori* for short). Although *H. pylori* is the dominant occupant of the stomach in adults when present, "fewer than 10 percent of children in the United States harbor this bacterium in their stomach today," Martin Blaser, a microbiologist at New York University, reported in the journal of the European Molecular Biology Organization.

A lack of *H. pylori* may be behind the epidemic in asthma and other allergies, he says, as well as the increase in gastric reflux

some flora are growing at the expense of others, causing disease. Scientists are only now identifying the players. Two years ago, the National Institutes of Health launched its Human Microbiome Project with the goal of fully explaining the "microbiome," the occupants of a normal intestine, analogous to the genome. But the map is years away.

So what can you do about the Darwinian battle within your gut? Many doctors recommend supplementing your diet with "probiotics," or friendly flora, when you take antibiotics or have digestive issues. Although the evidence is still coming in, a growing number of doctors also advise people to take probiotic supplements for general prevention.

When healthy children take probiotics, for example, they seem to get fewer colds. "To keep your immune system working at its best, it's good to take a probiotic supplement or eat probiotic foods daily even if you don't



"To keep your immune system working at its best, it's good to take a probiotic supplement or eat probiotic foods daily."

have a particular condition you're trying to treat," Gary Huffnagle, a professor of internal medicine, microbiology and immunology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, told the newsletter *Bottom Line Health*. If you decide to take a supplement, look for one that contains more than one type of microflora. He recommends the

multi-strain supplements Jarro-Dophilus EPS, available at health food or drug stores, or Theralac, which is easiest to find through online distributors.

Hospitals have used VSL #3, a combination of eight bacterial species sold in packet form that has been tested in a clinical trial. It is available online at VSL3.com.

Companies have also produced a flurry of foods to meet a growing demand. Among the probiotic-enriched foods, Dannon's low-fat yogurt Activia and the dairy drink DanActive contain well-researched probiotic bacteria.

Yogurt with the "live and active cultures" seal from the National Yogurt Association contains 100 million live bacteria per gram at the time of manufacture, though not everything you'll find in Activia.

Aged cheeses, such as cheddar or blue cheese, typically contain 3 billion to 10 billion organisms per serving. Generally, the longer a cheese is aged, the higher the probiotic load.

Kefir, a type of fermented milk, usually has at least three billion organisms per serving. Traditional fermented foods like sauerkraut, miso, and kimchi also contain live bacteria and have been associated with good health for centuries. Probiotics thrive on fiber, so they are yet another reason to eat more vegetables and whole grains. □

HOW TO USE PROBIOTICS ON A DAILY BASIS

► DR. RUSSELL BLAYLOCK, A BOARD-CERTIFIED neurosurgeon, believes many digestive issues, including irritable bowel syndrome, are caused by deficiencies in good bacteria in the gut. Probiotics, he says, can help. He offers these tips for taking the probiotic supplement Theralac:

■ Take three Theralac twice a day if you are taking antibiotics and then two daily for two weeks after the antibiotics have been stopped.

■ If you are a heavy consumer of meats that are not antibiotic free, take one Theralac a day, which will help with good bowel maintenance.

■ Women who suffer from one of the following conditions should take one Theralac capsule daily: recurrent bladder infections, vaginosis, yeast infections, a history of breast, colon, endometrial, cervical, or head and neck cancer.

■ The same is true for men with a history of prostate, head and neck, or colon cancer.

For a copy of Dr. Blaylock's "Probiotics: The Answer to Many Mystery Illnesses," along with his *Blaylock Wellness Report*, go to www.newsmax.com/immune or call 1-800-485-4350, ext. 924. □

