

How Beneficial Bacteria Calms Digestion

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



BACTERIA – the engine of good digestion

Though many people associate bacteria with negative or "bad" things, only relatively small portions of all bacteria are harmful or cause disease. Most bacteria are harmless and, in fact, some bacteria are crucial in maintaining proper health for your dog. These good bacteria are collectively referred to as "beneficial bacteria" and maximize nutritional intake and contribute to the health of your dog.

Incorporated as part of a balanced diet, beneficial bacteria allow effective digestion for increased nutrient absorption, production of important vitamins, decreased incidences of disease, and strengthening of the immune system for overall health.

Maintain an effective digestive tract

We are familiar with the importance of a nutritionally balanced diet. We know that nutrition affects growth, energy level, skin and coat condition, muscle mass, and disease resistance. However, very rarely do we consider the mechanisms of digestion and how these nutrients are processed.

Maintain a balanced internal environment

While some beneficial bacteria produce chemicals that inhibit the growth of harmful bacteria, most beneficial bacteria help prevent disease through population control. A healthy population of beneficial bacteria will actively compete for space and nutrients to prevent harmful bacteria from multiplying to disease-causing proportions. Also, better nutrient absorption facilitated by beneficial bacteria means a healthier immune system that is better able to fight off pathogens.

Incorporate beneficial bacteria

As we understand the importance of beneficial bacteria, specialized diets and products are being introduced into the market that utilize or promote beneficial bacteria. These products can be classified into two groups, prebiotics and probiotics.

Prebiotics are soluble dietary fibers that promote the growth of beneficial bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract. Prebiotics are present in many natural foods; chicory root and garlic, for instance, contain inulin that feeds and maintains beneficial bacteria such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus* in the gastrointestinal tract. Inulin contains sugars that cannot be digested by animal digestive enzymes or other bacteria, ensuring a healthy population of only beneficial intestinal flora.

Probiotics on the other hand, are actual cultures of beneficial bacteria used to fortify existing populations. Products such as [Probiotic Soft Chews](#) and [Bene-Bac Plus](#) are ideal for re-establishing beneficial bacteria compromised through the use of antibiotics or other medications. They can also be used for newborn puppies to aid in digestion and better nutrient absorption for healthy growth.

To make supplementation easier and more convenient, consider quality foods such as our [Signature Series® Adult Dog Food](#), containing probiotics to promote better health and nutrition. In the case of beneficial bacteria, good things do come in

BENEFICIAL BACTERIA BASICS

Did You Know?

- The collection of beneficial bacteria found in the gastrointestinal tract are called "intestinal flora"

small packages.

and considered the
engine of digestion.

- Beneficial bacteria aid digestion by effectively breaking down food into their basic components for easier absorption and utilization by the body.
- Furthermore, bacteria in the intestines manufacture Vitamin K and some B vitamins essential for proper health.
- The most common and popular source of beneficial bacteria is yogurt, containing natural cultures of *Lactobacillus*.