

# Dartmouth-Hitchcock Inflammatory Bowel Disease Center

## Medication Information Sheet for Probiotics

**Brand Names:** Many brands (eg., VSL#3, PB8)

**Generic Name:** Probiotics

### What do these supplements do?

Probiotic bacteria favorably alter the intestinal microflora (bacteria) balance, help inhibit the growth of harmful bacteria, promote good digestion, boost immune function, and increase resistance to infection. People with flourishing intestinal colonies of beneficial bacteria are better equipped to fight the growth of disease-causing bacteria.

### Why use probiotics in IBD?

Although the cause of inflammatory bowel disease is not known, there is evidence to suggest that a change in the gut flora may be an important early step in the disease. In this theory, healthy bacteria may be reduced as a result of an overgrowth of “bad” bacteria which can cause an over reaction from the immune system. Taking probiotics may essentially replace the good bacteria and therefore reduce the bad ones.

### Benefits of probiotics in pouchitis:

A recent study using VSL#3 showed that probiotics was helpful in maintaining remission in pouchitis. Pouchitis is an inflammatory condition thought to be similar to the inflammation seen in ulcerative colitis.

### Probiotics may also be helpful in controlling:

- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Flatulence (increased gas)
- Bloating
- Malodorous stools
- Cramping
- Malabsorption (lactose intolerance, carbohydrate intolerance)
- Cholesterol
- Halitosis (bad breath)

### Dosage and Administration:

There is no consensus on how much probiotic to take daily. One suggestion is to start at 50 billion per day (eg., 5 capsules containing 10 billion bacteria each or 2 packets of VSL#3 twice daily)

- Buy a probiotic with multiple cultures (strains of Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium)
- Store in the refrigerator
- This medication may be taken with food but avoid hot liquids and hot (warm) food
- Avoid taking with acidic foods and beverages
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember

### Where can I get probiotics?

- Health food stores such as Whole Foods Market or Wild Oats
- [www.vsl3.com](http://www.vsl3.com) or 1-866-GET-VSL3