



Kefir Benefits

Kefir is a unique cultured dairy product that is one of the most probiotic rich foods on the planet and has incredible medicinal benefits for healing issues like leaky gut.

Its unique name comes from the Turkish work "keif", which means "good feeling".

For centuries, it has been used in European and Asian folk medicine due to the wide variety of conditions it has been known to cure. When made correctly, it is one of my favourite drinks and, after reading this article, I hope that you consider including it into your regular natural health regimen.

Kefir Nutrition Facts

Kefir is a fermented milk product (cow, goat or sheep milk) that tastes like a drinkable yogurt.

Kefir contains high levels of vitamin B12, calcium, magnesium, vitamin K2, biotin, folate, enzymes and probiotics. Because kefir does not have a standardized nutrition content, the content values can vary based on the cows, cultures, and region where it is produced. Yet even with the range in values, kefir has superior nutrition.

Because of kefir's unique set of nutrients, it has been show to benefit the body in 7 main ways:

- Boost Immunity
- Heal Inflammatory Bowel Disease
- Build Bone Density
- Fight Allergies
- Improve Lactose Digestion
- Kill Candida
- Support Detoxification

And these are just a few of the benefits of consuming kefir daily.

Kefir Probiotics Are Powerful



Since the beginning of time, every culture has pickled and fermented foods primarily to preserve them. Unknowingly, they were magnificently creating superfoods jam-packed with healthy microorganisms (also known as "probiotics") and regularly enjoyed healthy, long lives because of them.

In his Theory of Longevity, Nobel Laureate Elie Metchnikoff pioneered research suggesting that fermented milk had significant health benefits back in the early 20th century.

Since then, research has proven time and time again that the age-old practice of fermentation is good medicine because of the "healthy bacteria" that are contained within these foods.

A list of the more common probiotics that we regularly see in fermented foods include:

- **Bifidobacteria species**
- **Lactobacillus acidophilus**
- **Lactobacillus caucanus**
- **Lactobacillus bulgaricus**
- **Lactobacillus rhamnosus**
- **Acetobacter species**
- **Leuconostoc**

Kefir is one of the highest probiotic foods you can eat with several important probiotic strains. And homemade kefir far outranks any store-bought variety:

KEFIR

PROBIOTIC CONTENT

LACTOBACILLI

LACTOBACILLUS KEFIR
LACTOBACILLUS KEFIRANOFACIENS
LACTOBACILLUS KEFIRGRANUM
LACTOBACILLUS PARAKEFIR
LACTOBACILLUS BREVIS
LACTOBACILLUS PLANTARUM
LACTOBACILLUS HELVETICUS
LACTOBACILLUS ACIDOPHILUS
LACTOBACILLUS DELBRECKII
LACTOBACILLUS RHAMNOSUS
LACTOBACILLUS CASEI
LACTOBACILLUS PARACASEI
LACTOBACILLUS FRUCTIVORANS
LACTOBACILLUS HILGARDII
LACTOBACILLUS FERMENTUM
LACTOBACILLUS VIRIDISOENS

OTHER BACTERIA

BACILLUS
BACILLUS SUBTILIS
MICROCOCCUS SO.
ESCHERICHIA COLI

LEUCONOSTOC

LEUCONOSTOC MESENEROIDES
LEUCONOSTOC MESENEROIDES

ENTEROCOCCI

ENTEROCOCCUS DURANS

LACTOCOCCI

LACTOCOCCUS LACTIS SUBSP. LACTIS
LACTOCOCCUS LACTIS SUBSP. CREMORIS

ACETOBACTER ACETI

ACETOBACTER SP.
ACETOBACTER ACETI
ACETOBACTER PASTEURIANUS

STREPTOCOCCI

STREPTOCOCCUS THERMOPHILUS

Data courtesy of <http://www.babushkaskefir.com.au/howdoesitalwork.html>

Dr. Axe
FOOD IS MEDICINE

At this point you may be wondering: why would we want to eat foods with bacteria in them? Don't people take antibiotics to kill the bacteria so that they can feel better?

Living in the American "antibacterial" culture, where hand sanitizer is only an arm's length away, it may seem like suicide for people to knowingly eat foods or drink beverages filled with microorganisms. However, nothing could be further from the truth! The key to understanding this is to learn a little bit about your gut.

Kefir Grains are Good for Your Microbiome



Did you know that over 75% of your immune system is housed in your digestive system? Essentially, trillions upon trillions of “good” bacteria and fungus kill the “bad” microorganisms, which keeps you alive and well.

So what happens when you take antibiotics or regularly use antibacterial lotions and soaps? **You literally kill the good bacteria and the bad ones take over.** This, in turn, disturbs the symbiosis (balance) of your microbiome which will lead to digestive issues and immune reactions.

Studies have linked everything from **autism** to most chronic diseases to leaky gut syndrome and improper digestion. Bottom line is that if you can't absorb the nutrients in your food because you don't have the proper bacteria balance in your gut, your body will never run on all cylinders because it lacks the fuel.

Kefir Health Benefits Proven by Medical Studies

First described by tribes in Russia, “kefir grains” are actually not grains at all, but are a delicate balance of yeast and bacteria.

Able to ferment milk in around 24 hours, kefir grains can transform raw milk into a Superfood probiotic drink (kefir), a naturally-carbonated, refreshing beverage that has several key medicinal benefits.

Rich in *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidobacterium bifidum*, kefir also provides significant amounts of lactic acid bacteria and beneficial yeast. In fact, the cocktail of beneficial microbiota within kefir makes it one of the most powerful probiotic foods on the planet!

1. Fights Cancer – Consumption of fermented foods has been shown to kill several different types of cancerous tumours in animal studies. The *Journal of Dairy Science*, for example, published a study that evaluated the immune cells in mice and discovered that regular kefir consumption helps stop breast cancer growth.

2. Supports Detoxification – “Mutagens” are various agents that can literally alter your DNA and can be found everywhere in our environment.

Aflatoxins, for example, are food-born toxins created by mould and can be found in many ground nuts (which is why peanut butter causes allergies and immune reactions), crude vegetable oils (like canola, soybean, and cottonseed), and grains (wheat, soy, and corn).

Being rich in lactic acid bacteria, kefir can literally bind (kill) aflatoxins and other funguses, which helps preserve healthy genetic expression.

3. Boosts Immunity - Next time you get sick, think twice about taking an antibiotic and drink kefir instead. A study out of University College Cork in Ireland compared Lactobacillus probiotic preparations, and compared them to conventional antibiotics in three animal models that are similar to humans. They discovered that, "In all three animal diseases we observed a positive effect in that the animals were significantly protected against infection."

In fact, the researchers discovered that probiotics worked as well as or even better than antibiotic therapy in not only eliminating the infectious agent, but in resolving symptoms!

4. Builds Bone Density - A 2014 study published in the journal of Osteoporosis International found that consuming kefir benefits bone density and can reduce the risk of osteoporosis. The researchers found kefir works by increasing the absorption of bone building minerals of calcium and magnesium.

The probiotics in kefir improve nutrient absorption and the dairy itself contains all of the most important nutrients for improving bone density including phosphorus, calcium, magnesium, vitamin D and vitamin K2.

5. Heals IBS and IBD - Because of the high doses of probiotics including the strains of lactobacillus and bifidobacterium kefir is also an effective natural treatment for irritable bowel syndrome. A study published in a Canadian medical journal found that probiotic rich foods, including yogurt and kefir, can help heal IBS and reduce bowel inflammation.

6. Allergies and Asthma - In a recent study published in the Journal of Immunology, kefir was found to have both positive effects on allergies and asthma. In the study, kefir significantly suppressed inflammatory markers of interleukin-4, T-helper cells and IgE immunoglobulins. The researchers stated that kefir has strong anti-inflammatory properties that could prove useful in the prevention of asthma.

7. Improves Lactose Intolerance - It may sound crazy, but yes fermented milk products like kefir can help people with milk-related lactose intolerance. To grip your brain around this, you have to keep in mind that fermentation *changes the chemical make-up of foods* and, as in the case of fermented milk, kefir is relatively low in lactose.

Additionally, if you struggle with lactose problems, you may want to try adding kefir to your diet in small amounts because a study in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* showed that, "Kefir improves lactose digestion and tolerance in adults with lactose malabsorption." As a disclaimer: although I have found most people do very well with goat's milk kefir a small percent of people may still have issues with dairy.

If you have had lactose intolerance, my advice is to try it first by placing a small drop of the kefir on the inside of your arm or wrist and let it dry. Then wait 24 hours and see if you have any inflammation. If you do, then steer clear of it. But if not, then try adding just a drop or two to a beverage or some food and see if you have any reaction. You can then increase the amount until you are certain that you are not reacting to it.

As with any food or diet, make sure to listen to your body.

NOTE: If you have had an allergic reaction with any dairy, then I would seek advice from your doctor or natural health practitioner on how to test your allergies without ingesting the kefir.

Types of Kefir

You'll be happy to know that even if you cannot tolerate having any dairy, there are types of kefir that are still rich in probiotics and have plenty of healthy kefir benefits, but that are completely lactose and dairy free. There are essentially two main types of kefir, and they differ in multiple ways.

The two types of kefir are: milk kefir (made from cow, sheep, or goat milk but also from coconut milk) and water kefir (made from sugary water or coconut water, both of which do not contain any dairy).

While the base liquid used in different types of kefirs vary, the process for making kefir is still the same and the health benefits are thought to be present in both types. All kefir is made using kefir "grains", which are a yeast/bacterial fermentation starter. All types of kefirs are similar to kombucha (another healthy probiotic-rich drink favourite) in that they must have sugar either naturally present, or else added, in order to allow the healthy bacteria to grow and for the fermentation process to take place. However, the end result is that both kombucha and kefir are very low in sugar, because the live active yeast essentially "eats" the large majority of the added sugar during fermentation.

Milk kefir is the kind that is normally most well-known and widely available, usually sold in most major supermarkets and nearly all health food stores. Milk kefir is most often made from goat's milk, cow's milk, or sheep's milk, but certain stores also carry coconut milk kefir, which again means it does not contain any lactose, dairy, or real "milk" at all.

When buying milk kefir made from goat, cow, or sheep milk, you want to always look for a high-quality organic brand to ensure you are getting the most benefits and avoiding any harmful substances found in conventional dairy.

Traditionally, milk kefir is made using a *starter culture*, which is what ultimately allows the probiotics to form. All probiotic-rich beverages use a starter kit of "live" active yeast which is responsible for creating the beneficial bacteria.

Once fermented, kefir has a tart taste that is somewhat similar to the taste of Greek yogurt. How strong the taste is depends on how long the kefir fermented; longer fermentation usually leads to a stronger tarter taste and even yields some carbonation which results from the active yeast.

Milk kefir is not naturally sweet on its own, but other flavours can be added to it in order to boost the flavour and make it more appealing. While some people prefer to have kefir plain, many like to have vanilla or berry-flavoured kefirs, similarly to how you will find yogurts flavoured and sold.

Most store-bought kefirs will be flavoured with additions like fruit or cane sugar, but you can sweeten and flavour your kefir yourself at home by adding pure honey (preferably raw), pure maple syrup, pure vanilla extract, or organic stevia extract. Also try adding pureed fruit to your plain kefir (like banana or blueberries) to boost the nutrient content even more.

Beyond just drinking milk kefir, there are other ways to cleverly use it in recipes. Milk kefir can make a great base for soups and stews that would otherwise call for regular buttermilk, sour cream, heavy cream, or yogurt. You can substitute kefir for any of these in ingredients in your favourite recipes for baked goods, mashed potatoes, soups, and more in order to boost the nutrient content.