

# Drink to your health with kefir

One of the newer additions to the dairy section, kefir is a type of fermented milk product similar to yogurt. Its consistency is generally thin, so it's usually sold in bottles as a drink. But what makes it different from yogurt, besides the ability to skip the spoon?

Like yogurt, kefir is usually made from dairy milk that is fermented with helpful bacteria (though it can be made with non-dairy milks as well). These bacteria, known as probiotics, may have a number of health benefits, according to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. Probiotics may be helpful in treating the following issues:

- Diarrhea, constipation, irritable bowel syndrome and other bowel disorders
- Digestive problems, such as acid reflux
- The common cold
- Seasonal allergies and eczema
- Cavities and gum disease
- Colic in babies
- Liver disease

Kefir may also help prevent stomach side effects and complications that arise from taking antibiotics.



Kefir contains many different strains of probiotics and generally has a bigger variety than store-bought yogurts. It also contains beneficial yeast—an ingredient not found in yogurt. This friendly yeast may help fight off bad yeast in the body, such as those that cause yeast infections.



Many people who are lactose intolerant can still drink dairy kefir. The lactic acid bacteria found in kefir breaks down the lactose, making it easier to digest. People with dairy allergies, however, should only consume a dairy-free version.

## **How to get it:**

Kefir can be made at home with plain milk and kefir starter grains, which are usually found at health food stores. Though plain is healthiest, many people find they need to sweeten it to offset the tart taste. Try mixing it in smoothies with fresh or frozen fruit.



Many grocery stores carry kefir in the dairy section near the yogurt. Though kefir is healthy, look at the label before purchasing. Some brands and flavors may contain too much sugar or artificial sweeteners.