



PROEUHEALTH

## Ensuring the safety of probiotic bacteria

Probiotic lactic acid bacteria (LAB) are, by definition, bacteria that have beneficial influences in the human body. LAB have a good safety record and a long history of safe use. Intensified search for new probiotic strains that can be added to human food has lifted the safety issues more central. The PROSAFE-project aims to define the criteria, standards, guidelines and regulations for probiotic LABs to secure this good safety record.

The first task in the PROSAFE-project was to collect more than 750 strains from scientists and industry. These bacteria were then characterised and almost all lactobacilli and 86% of the bifidobacteria could be identified. This identification is a vital step in developing a systematic description of probiotics.

When the possible ability of lactobacilli to resist the effects of antibiotics were tested, no real resistance was detected. Evaluating the antibiotic resistance of lactobacilli a new method had to be developed. With this new method the found resistance was low, and probiotics did not differ from other lactobacilli derived from humans.

These first year results provide a starting point for establishing a database on the safety of probiotic strains. The work will continue by complementing the database and providing guidelines for testing the safety of potential new probiotic strains.

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