Antibiotics and Probiotics

Antibiotics are commonly used to temporarily reduce an infection to the lowest possible level before, during, or after definitive treatment. Many times these antibiotics can cause stomach upset and/or diarrhea, because they kill all bacteria in the body, not just the ‘bad bacteria’ causing the infection we are treating. Unfortunately, the gastrointestinal system also needs ‘good bacteria’ to properly digest foods. So, if all the bacteria in the body are killed off with the antibiotic regimen, the gastrointestinal system can become problematic.

To help with this potential and fairly common issue, the regular use of probiotics is recommended for all patients who are/will be taking an antibiotic. In fact, many people take probiotics on a regular and continuing basis even if they are taking no antibiotics at all. There are different types of probiotics, some argue one is more effective than another, but any of them will help with the scenario above and should be used as directed below.

Usually, a patient would want to take the antibiotic as ordered in the prescription, and alternate the concurrent use of the probiotics, taking them in-between the antibiotic dosages. A sample follows:

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<td>7:00am</td>
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Some of the bacteria you might find in an over-the-counter probiotics include:

Enterococcus faecium - shown in studies to be helpful for diarrhea, shortening duration of symptoms.
Lactobacillus acidophilus - the most well known probiotic, important for the health of the small intestine.
Lactobacillus brevis - is a lactic acid producing probiotic that is helpful in synthesizing Vitamins D and K.
Bifidobacterium bifidum - is the most recognized of this category, preventing pathogenic bacteria and yeast from invading, it also creates favorable changes in pH levels by producing lactic and acetic acids.