

Refrigerated probiotics

By Dr.HMT



It's possible that you've heard from a friend or come across on the internet that your [probiotics](#) should be refrigerated for optimal results. With that said, there are two popular fridge myths: all probiotics need to be refrigerated and refrigerated probiotics are superior.

I am Dr. Tun Min, a general practitioner practicing in the Northwest NHS UK, with a passion for probiotics. In this piece, I aim to provide you with my expert perspective on the topic of refrigerated probiotics.

Do I need to keep probiotics in the refrigerator?

Not all probiotics need to be refrigerated. The probiotic strain and the manufacturing process will determine how you should store your probiotics.

Different strains, different sensitivity

Heat and moisture are the biggest enemies of probiotics since heat can kill the bacteria and humidity can activate them within pills, only to let them die due to lack of nutrients.

Different strains of probiotics have varying sensitivity levels to heat and environmental factors. The sensitive bacteria require refrigeration for their survival.

Manufacturing process

[Freeze drying](#) is the process used to make the probiotics shelf-stable effectively. However, not all strains of probiotics can be freeze-dried. And such probiotics need to be kept in the fridge.

How do I know if my probiotics should be refrigerated?



1. Pay attention to the “type of strain”

Common probiotic strains, including [*Lactobacillus*](#), [*Bifidobacterium*](#), and [*Streptococcus*](#), are very sensitive to heat. So they need to be stored in the refrigerator.

On the other hand, those in the [*Bacillus* genus](#) and [*Saccharomyces boulardii*](#) can withstand harsh environmental factors more easily and are considered shelf-stable.

2. Read the “label”

The storage instructions on probiotic supplements will guide you on how to properly preserve them. If your probiotics call for “refrigeration”, store it in the fridge. If the label says “shelf-stable”, it can sit at room temperature.

3. Remember how it was “stored” when you “purchased”

If you purchased your probiotics from the refrigerated aisle or if the product was delivered in packaging with an ice pack, then it is more than likely that the probiotic needs to be refrigerated.

4. Check the “ingredients”

Certain [probiotic foods](#) like yogurt, kefir, [kombucha](#) and [sauerkraut](#) contain dairy and other perishable ingredients that have a shorter shelf life compared to the probiotics themselves. These temperature-sensitive ingredients require refrigeration to prevent spoilage and maintain the product's quality.

Are refrigerated probiotics better?

In terms of efficacy, refrigerated probiotics are not necessarily better than shelf-stable ones. You are getting the same probiotic benefits with either option.

The final verdict of the battle between refrigerated probiotics and shelf-stable ones comes down to two things.

1. Personal preference

If you live in a very hot climate, refrigerated probiotics may be preferable. If you travel a lot, shelf-stable probiotics will be more convenient to carry around. And are you more likely to remember to take it when you open your fridge every morning or when it is kept in plain sight?

Afterall, the choice is up to you since the consistency of taking probiotics every day is the real ticket.

2. Your health condition needs refrigerated probiotics

As I have aforementioned, certain strains of probiotic bacteria require refrigeration or are sensitive to freeze-dried processing.

So if your doctor recommends probiotics supplements with these types of strains according to your health needs and goals, then of course, it will best serve your supplementary needs.

The best ways to store probiotics

No matter which type of probiotic supplement you choose, please remember that probiotics are live microorganisms and they could die if you do not store them correctly. To reap the health benefits of probiotics, you have to protect these living things at any cost.

Protect your probiotics from heat and humidity

Even probiotics that do not require refrigeration should be kept in a cool, dry place. It can be on your kitchen bench or on your desk.

Don't decant your probiotics

Keep your probiotics in their original packaging or bottle unless you are ready to use them since the packaging is designed to protect from heat, and humidity. Putting them into a weekly pill container for convenience will expose them to moisture and shorten their shelf life.

Strictly follow storage instructions

If you store your probiotics exactly as the label indicated, you can improve the odds that the bacteria live to their best-by date.

The final say

Whether refrigerated or shelf stable probiotics, the important thing is to [choose high quality products](#) and store the probiotics properly for their longevity.

Also keep in mind that taking probiotics is not one-day-magic and consistent daily use is necessary for desired outcomes. So, carefully consider your preferences when choosing a product.

Additionally, consulting with your healthcare provider regarding your desired health goals can help determine if you require refrigerated probiotics tailored to your needs.