



PROBIOTICS

EDUCATION PROGRAMME

PETALING JAYA: Contrary to recent reports in the media and viral messages shared on social media, foods and drinks containing live probiotic cultures are safe to consume.

According to Nutritionist, Dr Tee E Siong on behalf of the Probiotic Education Program Expert Group of the Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM), “Based on all available science, there is no safety concern regarding the consumption of foods and beverages containing probiotic cultures.”

Dr Tee, who is President of NSM and Chair of the Expert Group added: “Unfounded rumours and misinterpretation of information regarding probiotics have been circulating on social media from time to time. We call upon the public not to make simplistic conclusions from scientific publications. They should refer to experts when it comes to matters related to nutrition and in this case, probiotics”.

The Probiotic Education Programme 2018 is an initiative by the Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM), and one of the programme’s goals is to empower the public in order to help them gain a better understanding of probiotics and how it can benefit their digestive health while at the same time, clearing up any misconceptions about what constitutes a probiotic product.

A vital aspect of digestive health

Our digestive tract is home to trillions of microorganisms, collectively known as the gut microbiota. Dr Tee reveals “In order to ensure good digestive health, a balanced gut microbiota is crucial to help us maintain a healthy gut, which in turn can result bring about efficient digestive functions and strengthening of the immune system. These are important factors in maintaining overall health. One specific dietary factor is probiotics, which may help to keep our gut microbiota balanced while maintaining its integrity and diversity.”

According to World Health Organization (WHO), probiotics are live microorganisms, which have been proven in controlled human studies, to provide health benefits to the human body when consumed in adequate amounts. These probiotics, also known as friendly bacteria, have been formulated into many different types of foods and beverages.

Probiotics regulated by MOH

Ministry of Health (MOH) Malaysia recently gazetted a regulation on probiotics for Malaysia in April 2017. This food law spells out the requirements for a product to be labelled as “probiotics”, e.g. the product must contain a bacterial strain that is permitted in the regulation and must have a minimum

number of viable/ life probiotic cultures. The fact that MOH has permitted the addition of probiotic cultures to foods and beverages indicates the safety of these permitted beneficial bacteria.

Highlights of the programme

The key activity of the Probiotic Education Programme 2018 is the publication of a booklet entitled “Probiotics: The Friendly Gut Bacteria for Your Health” which will be available for the public in English, Bahasa Malaysia and Chinese. The booklets are designed with easy-to-understand information on good gut health and probiotics for the public.

For more details or to download the educational materials, you may visit NSM’s website at www.nutriweb.org.my/probiotics, where the educational materials from this programme will be made available to the public. Do check in periodically as the programme will post new updates or more information from time to time.

For enquiries or more information, email: president@nutriweb.org.my or visit www.nutriweb.org.my/probiotics.

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