



TASTE TEST

Drinks that give you good bacteria

Probiotic drinks are designed to build up the 'good' bacteria our bodies need to stay healthy, and they're available in every supermarket chilled food section. But how palatable are they? Our tasting panel put six drinks to the test.

OUR VERDICT People with a good diet and healthy lifestyle shouldn't need daily probiotics, according to nutritionist Drew Price. 'If, however, you have taken antibiotics, suffer from stress or a digestive disorder such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), a probiotic drink may help – but only if you take it regularly.' Our panel had no difficulty in choosing the best-tasting drinks, and they're all reassuringly low in fat. On the other hand, they're all high in sugar. Most contain more than 12g of sugar per 100g – equivalent to around three teaspoons, so you might want to stick to the few that have a lower sugar content.



	Rachel's Organic Kids Probiotic Drinking Yogurt (Strawberry)	Marks & Spencer Low-Fat Strawberry Probiotic Yogurt Drink	Flora Omega3 plus Probiotic Mini Drink (Strawberry)
Price	4 x 125ml bottles, £2.29	4 x 100g bottles, £1.49	6 x 100ml bottles, £1.99
Stars	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★
Nutrition	14.5g sugar per bottle	12.5g sugar per bottle	8.4g sugar per bottle
Tasters' verdict	Although aimed at children over six months, this drink has a thick texture and fruity flavour that make it a pleasant snack for anyone. Each bottle contains nearly a quarter of the daily recommended amount of sugar, though.	Added lemon juice stops this strawberry yogurt drink being too sickly, though it's still high in sugar. It has a similar consistency to a smoothie and our tasters liked its natural pale pink colour.	Slightly thin and watery but with a pleasant, natural strawberry flavour. Contains added Omega3, which has been found to help heart health and brain function.
Stockists	Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose	Marks & Spencer	Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose

Also tested Danone Actimel Original ★★ £2.34 for 8 x 100ml bottles from Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose; **Muller Vitality Vanilla** ★ £1.85 for 6 x 100g bottles from Asda, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose; **Yakult Original** ★ £2.55 for 7 x 65ml bottles from Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose.

Words and testing: Emilie Martin; Jessica Hunt; Jacquelyn Fedpath; Judith Gubbay; Joanne Finney; Virginia Vallis. Photographs: Alamy; Getty Images; Toys R Us

STICK VACUUM CLEANERS

Time savers or space wasters?

A lightweight stick vacuum cleaner sounds ideal for whisking away stray crumbs and pet hairs without getting out your main machine – but how useful are these gadgets in practice? We tested seven to find out – all are bagless, with the exception of the Hoover Junior Plus, which comes with two disposable bags and one reusable cloth one.

OUR VERDICT None of the stick cleaners is a substitute for a full-sized vacuum cleaner, especially on carpet, but the best make light work of superficial cleaning jobs. If you need a lightweight, full-sized cleaner that can tackle the whole house, we recommend the Oreck XL5, £359 (0800 684684; oreck.co.uk), which scored 82/100 in our November 2005 test.

Hoover Junior Plus ST327E

£59.99–£69.99, 3.8kg

- Good range of tool attachments.
- Shoulder strap for use as a portable cleaner.
- Excellent performance on carpet and hard floors.

Stockists: 0168 572 5572; hoover.co.uk



Home-tek Smart Vac HT813

£79.99, 3.3kg, cordless

- Can be used to vacuum liquid from hard floors.
- Excellent on hard floors and also at removing pet hair from carpet.
- Poor pick-up of dust from carpets.

Stockists: 01924 491188; hometekinternational.co.uk

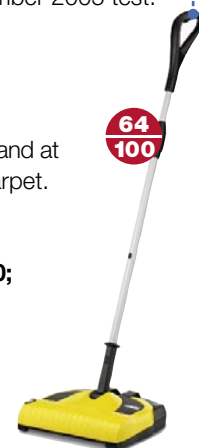


Kärcher K55

£49.99, 2kg, cordless

- Very quiet in use.
- Excellent on hard floors and at removing pet hair from carpet.
- Poor pick-up of dust from carpets.

Stockists: 01295 752200; karcher.co.uk



For details of all seven stick vacuum cleaners tested, please email consumer.query@natmags.co.uk