**Probiotic drink 'myth': No evidence that yoghurt products boost healthy bacteria, say scientists**

* **The drinks have been credited with treating IBS, obesity and even cancer**
* **The probiotic market is worth almost £20billion around the world**
* **Products such as Yakult and Actimel used by six in ten British households**
* **But a major study into the products found they have no health benefits**

By [SOPHIE BORLAND FOR THE DAILY MAIL](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/search.html?s=&authornamef=Sophie+Borland+for+the+Daily+Mail)

**PUBLISHED:** 01:12, 10 May 216 | **UPDATED:** 01:42, 10 May 2016

If you are one of the thousands of Britons who religiously down a probiotic drink every morning you may find this news rather hard to stomach.

A major study into the benefits of the drinks has found ... there aren’t any.

In fact, scientists believe there is ‘no convincing evidence’ that probiotic drinks – which claim to boost everything from immunity to digestion – have any serious benefits for healthy people at all.

The probiotic market is worth almost £20billion globally, with products such as Yakult and Actimel regularly used by six in ten British households.

Such drinks claim to contain ‘friendly’ bacteria and yeasts which help to restore the natural balance of bacteria in the stomach and intestines.

They have been credited with treating and preventing a range of health conditions including IBS, obesity and even cancer.

But Danish researchers reviewed seven trials and concluded probiotic drinks and yoghurts made little difference to the make-up of the gut’s bacteria in most cases.

The experts looked at major trials which had previously assessed how unnamed probiotic drinks, biscuits or pills affected the bacteria of healthy adults.

They found for six of the seven trials there was no difference in the bacteria between adults who had been given probiotics or placebos.

One study identified a minor change in the diversity of bacteria, but this may have been flawed and unreliable.

The authors also said experts are still unsure as to which bacteria are ‘good’ or ‘friendly’ and which are harmful, though no specific brands were mentioned in the report.

Writing in the Genome Medicine journal, the scientists from the University of Copenhagen concluded: ‘Overall, this systematic review demonstrates there is no convincing evidence for consistent effects of probiotics on microbiota (bacteria) in healthy adults.’

The report’s senior author, Professor Oluf Pedersen said: ‘While there is some evidence from previous reviews that probiotic interventions may benefit those with disease-associated imbalances of the gut microbiota, there is little evidence of an effect in healthy individuals.’

Nadja Buus Kristensen, co-author of the study, said: ‘According to our systematic review, no convincing evidence exists for consistent effects of examined probiotics on microbiota composition in healthy adults, despite probiotic products being consumed to a large extent by the population.’

The study did not name particular brands. Actimel and Yakult, two of the most popular in Britain, both declined to comment yesterday.

The conclusions support research by University College London in 2014 which found most products offer no significant benefits.

Scientists said many of the good bacteria were destroyed by the stomach during digestion.

The global probiotics market is expected to grow by 7 per cent annually until at least 2018 with the UK and Germany being the largest consumers.