



Probiotic Candidate Bacteria's Capacity to Adsorb Heavy Metals within the Human Body

Nayereh Rezaie Rahimi^{1,2}, Reza Fouladi-Fard^{3,4*}

¹ Student Research Committee, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran.

² Department of Environmental Health Engineering, School of Public Health, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran.

³ Environmental Health Research Center, School of Health and Nutrition, Lorestan University of Medical Sciences, Khorramabad, Iran.

⁴ Research Center for Environmental Pollutants, Qom University of Medical Sciences, Qom, Iran.

ARTICLE INFO

LETTER TO EDITOR

Article History:

Received: 11 July 2023

Accepted: 10 August 2023

*Corresponding Author:

Reza Fouladi-Fard

Email:

rezafd@yahoo.com

Tel:

+98 9119525525

Citation: Rezaie Rahimi N, Fouladi-Fard R. *Probiotic Candidate Bacteria's Capacity to Adsorb Heavy Metals within the Human Body*. J Environ Health Sustain Dev. 2023; 8(3): 2019-21.

Below our peaceful surroundings, heavy metals (HMs) pollution quietly endangers ecosystems and human health, causing a harmful crisis that affects both our environment and health. The environment contains HMs, which play a crucial role in protecting life¹. HMs are commonly defined as metals with a density exceeding 5 g/cm³ that have harmful effects on both the environment and organisms². The rise of HMs pollution is attributed to the growing number of factories, expanding urban population, human activities, agriculture, and the overall increase in human population giving rise to concerns³⁻⁵. Some HMs, such as Zn, Cu, and Fe, are essential trace elements, while others like Cd and Pb lack any useful biological role and can be toxic even in tiny quantities. The growing prevalence of HMs in our resources is remarkable. It becomes a more significant issue as many industries discharge metal-laden wastewater into freshwater without appropriate treatment^{6,7}. HMs from the air and soil can enter our bodies through various pathways like eating, breathing, and skin contact.

These pollutants can harm vital organs like kidneys, liver, and bones. When these metals build up inside living organisms, they can create major problems. Common health issues linked to HMs exposure include decreased survival, growth inhibition, tissue damage, oxidative stress, respiratory problems, and gut microbial dysbiosis⁸. The food chain may be affected by the integration of harmful metals through rainwater, especially when the water has an acidic pH and comes into contact with the ground⁹. Common HMs that contribute to environmental pollution are mercury, cadmium, arsenic, chromium, nickel, copper, and lead¹. The thresholds for arsenic in air and drinking water according to the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines are $1.5 \times 10^{-3} \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and 0.01 mg/L, respectively. Certain foods such as fish, shellfish, meat, poultry, dairy products, and cereals can contain arsenic. Arsenic exists in two forms including inorganic and organic, each having different effects on human health. Inorganic arsenic can cause irritation in the gastrointestinal and lung

systems, skin changes, reduced production of red and white blood cells, increased cancer risk, as well as issues such as infertility, miscarriages, heart problems, brain damage, and DNA damage. On the other hand, organic arsenic might result in stomach discomfort and nerve damage, without affecting DNA or being linked to cancer¹⁰.

Many types of bacteria, such as *Bacillus*, *Bifidobacterium*, *Enterococcus*, *Lactobacillus*, *Leuconostoc*, *Pediococcus*, *Propionic bacterium*, and *Streptococcus*, have been used as probiotics¹¹. The WHO defines probiotics as “live microorganisms which when administered in adequate amounts are beneficial to the host.”¹² Recently, a few research studies have shown that certain types of *Lactobacillus* bacteria could become useful probiotics to help reduce and treat the harmful effect by HMs toxicity in the human body¹³. Probiotics work positively in the gut and support the immune system. Additionally, they offer advantages such as helping to prevent diabetes, urinary infections, candidiasis, osteoporosis, depression, anxiety, lactose intolerance, hypercholesterolemia, immune disorders and any other food allergy, irritable bowel syndrome, urinary tract infections, and symptoms of colds and flu. Moreover, they can even lower blood pressure¹⁴⁻¹⁶.

The gut microbiota plays a vital role in limiting the uptake and spread of harmful HMs. Gut microbiota is made up of different types of tiny organisms like bacteria, fungi, archaea, viruses, and protozoa. The gut microbiota assists in processes such as digesting food, regulation of the body metabolism, and proper functioning of the nervous and immune systems. The differentiation between the gut microbiota of humans and rodents contributes, in part, to the contrasting biological half-life of mercury in these two species, thereby resulting in different rates of elimination^{17, 18}.

Using probiotics in our diet help to remove HMs from our gut. This process is known as "gut remediation". Probiotics can effectively limit the body's intake of HMs through various mechanisms, such as trapping them in the intestines, reducing their harmful impact, modifying the body's

response to such substances, and preserving digestive health⁸. Recently, many strategies have been tried to reduce HMs pollution. However, most of them have been expensive and environmentally unfriendly¹⁹. In order to prevent further pollution and reduce the risks associated with HMs, it is crucial to effectively manage and control their release into the environment from various sources, such as factories, car emissions, and waste disposal²⁰.

Typically, individuals are exposed to significantly lower levels of HMs over long periods. As a result, understanding the effects of HMs exposure on human health becomes crucial, taking into account both the dosage and duration of exposure. Studies have shown that using probiotics can be an affordable and effective way to prevent or reduce gut and overall health problems caused by these metals¹⁷.

Therefore, it is important to study the potential benefits and advantages of probiotics in addressing the challenges posed by HMs toxicity. Efforts have led to a deeper understanding of probiotic bacteria's capacity to combat HMs toxicity, offering hope and solutions for a healthier world.

This is an Open-Access article distributed in accordance with the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license, which permits others to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon this work for commercial use.

References

1. Mitra S, Chakraborty AJ, Tareq AM, et al. Impact of heavy metals on the environment and human health: Novel therapeutic insights to counter the toxicity. *Journal of King Saud University-Science*. 2022;34(3):101865.
2. Jaishankar M, Tseten T, Anbalagan N, et al. Toxicity, mechanism and health effects of some heavy metals. *Interdisciplinary Toxicology*. 2014;7(2):60-72.
3. Hasan MS, Islam MZ, Liza RI, et al. Novel probiotic lactic acid bacteria with in vitro bioremediation potential of toxic lead and cadmium. *Current Microbiology*. 2022;79(12):387.

4. Jafarzadeh S, Fard RF, Ghorbani E, et al. Potential risk assessment of heavy metals in the Aharchai River in northwestern Iran. *Physics and Chemistry of the Earth, Parts A/B/C*. 2020;115:102812.
5. Mostafaii G, Bakhtyari Z, Atoof F, et al. Health risk assessment and source apportionment of heavy metals in atmospheric dustfall in a city of Khuzestan Province, Iran. *J Environ Health Sci Eng*. 2021;19:585-601.
6. Vhahangwele M, Khathutshelo LM. Environmental contamination by heavy metals. In: Hosam El-Din MS, Refaat FA, editors. *Heavy Metals*. Rijeka: IntechOpen; 2018.
7. Dehghani M, Rezaie Rahimi N, Zarei M, et al. Chemical and radiological human health risk assessment from uranium and fluoride concentrations in tap water samples collected from Shiraz, Iran; Monte-Carlo simulation and sensitivity analysis. *Int J Environ Anal Chem*. 2022:1-16.
8. Kakade A, Sharma M, Salama ES, et al. Heavy metals (HMs) pollution in the aquatic environment: Role of probiotics and gut microbiota in HMs remediation. *Environ Res*. 2023;223:115186.
9. Farajollahi M, Fahiminia M, Fouladi-Fard R, et al. Human and ecological risk assessment, geo-accumulation, and source apportionment of road dust heavy metals in a semi-arid region of central Iran. *Int J Environ Anal Chem*. 2022:1-24.
10. Briffa J, Sinagra E, Blundell R. Heavy metal pollution in the environment and their toxicological effects on humans. *Heliyon*. 2020; 6(9):e04691.
11. Abdel-Megeed RM. Probiotics: a Promising Generation of Heavy Metal Detoxification. *Biol Trace Elem Res*. 2021;199(6): 2406-13.
12. Cohen PA. Probiotic safety-no guarantees. *JAMA Intern Med*. 2018;178(12):1577-8.
13. Zhai Q, Tian F, Zhao J, et al. Oral administration of probiotics inhibits absorption of the heavy metal cadmium by protecting the intestinal barrier. *Applied and environmental microbiology*. 2016;82(14):4429-40.
14. Feng P, Yang J, Zhao S, et al. Human supplementation with *pediococcus acidilactici* GR-1 decreases heavy metals levels through modifying the gut microbiota and metabolome. *NPJ Biofilms Microbiomes*. 2022;8(1):63.
15. Zoghi A, Khosravi-Darani K, Sohrabvandi S. Surface binding of toxins and heavy metals by probiotics. *Mini Rev Med Chem*. 2014;14(1):84-98.
16. Pavlidou E, Fasoulas A, Mantzorou M, et al. Clinical evidence on the potential beneficial effects of probiotics and prebiotics in cardiovascular disease. *Int J Mol Sci*. 2022; 23(24):15898.
17. Duan H, Yu L, Tian F, et al. Gut microbiota: A target for heavy metal toxicity and a probiotic protective strategy. *Sci Total Environ*. 2020;742:140429.
18. Monroy-Torres R, Hernández-Luna MA, Ramírez-Gómez XS, et al. Role of the microbiome as the first metal detoxification mechanism. *Prebiotics and Probiotics-Potential Benefits in Nutrition and Health: IntechOpen*; 2019.
19. Abdel-Megeed RM. Probiotics: a Promising Generation of Heavy Metal Detoxification. *Biol Trace Elem Res*. 2021;199(6): 2406-13.
20. Soleimani A, Toolabi A, Mansour SN, et al. Health risk assessment and spatial trend of metals in settled dust of surrounding areas of Lake Urmia, NW Iran. *Int J Environ Anal Chem*. 2022:1-14.