

# Probiotic Buyer's Checklist for IBS

Use this checklist before you buy. The goal is not to find "the strongest" probiotic. The goal is to find the specific strain that matches your IBS pattern without adding ingredients that make symptoms worse.

## 1. Match the strain to your main symptom

- **IBS-D / urgency / loose stools:** Look for *Saccharomyces boulardii* or *Bacillus coagulans* MTCC 5856.
- **IBS-C / sluggish bowels:** Look for *Bifidobacterium lactis* HN019.
- **Bloating / gas:** Look for *Lactobacillus plantarum* 299v.
- **Mixed IBS / all-around support:** Look for *Bifidobacterium infantis* 35624.
- **Abdominal pain sensitivity:** Look for *Lactobacillus acidophilus* NCFM.

## 2. Confirm the label is strain-specific

- The bottle lists the full strain code, not just the species name.
- The strain on the label matches the symptom I am trying to improve.
- The serving size is clearly stated.
- The product tells me how many CFUs or spores I get per serving.

**Do not buy** if the front label says only "gut health blend" or "Lactobacillus + Bifido complex" without exact strain names.

## 3. Check dose and potency

- The dose is in the clinically useful range for that strain.
- The product guarantees potency through **expiration**, not only at manufacture.
- The dose is not wildly excessive for a sensitive gut.

**Practical rule:** For many IBS products, 1 to 10 billion CFU per day is a sensible starting range unless the studied strain uses a different amount.

## 4. Screen for hidden IBS triggers

- No inulin
- No FOS or fructooligosaccharides
- No chicory root fiber
- No sorbitol, mannitol, or xylitol
- No "prebiotic blend" unless I already know I tolerate it

If you are extremely bloat-prone, avoid products that combine probiotics with fermentable fibers on day one.

## 5. Verify quality and survivability

- The brand explains storage clearly: shelf-stable or refrigerated.
- The bottle is sealed and protected from heat and moisture.
- The capsules are delayed-release, enteric-coated, or otherwise designed to survive stomach acid.
- The company mentions third-party testing, GMP manufacturing, or lot testing.

## 6. Plan a smart trial instead of guessing

- Try **one new probiotic at a time**.
- Start with a half dose for the first 3 to 7 days if I am sensitive.
- Take it consistently for 4 to 12 weeks before judging results.
- Track bloating, stool pattern, pain, and urgency once per day.

## 7. Know when to stop

- Mild extra gas in week 1 may be temporary.
- If symptoms keep getting worse after 1 to 2 weeks, stop and reassess.
- If I have blood in stool, fever, weight loss, or severe pain, I need medical care rather than self-experimenting.

## Fast "Do Not Buy" Red Flags

- No strain code
- Mega-dose marketing with no symptom match
- Added inulin or chicory root
- No storage instructions
- No potency guarantee through expiration

## Store-Aisle Decision

If the product matches your main symptom, lists the exact strain, avoids common IBS triggers, and gives a clear dosing plan, it is worth trialing.

If it fails even one of those tests, put it back.