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### Introduction

A growing knowledge of the relationship between diet and health has resulted in an increasing demand for food products (functional foods) that are able to enhance health in addition to providing basic nutrition. To meet this demand, food industries are striving to identify food ingredients with health-promoting properties. Recent studies have shown that ingestion of certain strains of lactic acid bacteria (LAB) is able to enhance several physiological functions, especially the immune system. As a result, there is now considerable commercial interest in identifying new and more potent strains of dietary LAB that can promote health by enhancing immunity and resistance to infection. But what can we expect from such strains? How can health be improved by consuming LAB-supplemented foods?