

## Probiotics for healthy bowels

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### What are probiotics?

- Probiotics are healthy bacteria that normally live in our bowels. They help to keep the bowels healthy.
- Many adults and children take probiotic supplements to promote a healthy digestive system and prevent bowel problems.

#### Words to know

bowels	=	intestines
digestive system	=	gastrointestinal or GI tract

### Can babies be given probiotics?

- Yes. Probiotics can be given to babies to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria in their bowels.
- Harmful bacteria can cause inflammation and infection. In premature babies, this can lead to a bowel disease called Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC). NEC can destroy the wall of the bowel.

### Which babies are given probiotics in the NICU?

- Probiotics are given to all premature babies who are born before 34 weeks of pregnancy or weigh less than 2 kg at birth.
- We give the probiotics with the baby's first feeding and then, once a day with a feeding.
- In some situations, we do not give probiotics. If you have questions about giving probiotics to your baby, please talk with a member of your health care team.

## What are the benefits of probiotics?

Probiotics can:

- decrease the risk of NEC in premature babies
- help babies need fewer days of intravenous (IV) therapy and reach full feeds sooner
- improve health so babies can leave hospital earlier

## What risks are possible with probiotics?

- Research has shown that probiotics are safe for preterm babies. However, probiotics are live bacteria. We cannot guarantee that your baby will not develop an infection from one of these bacteria, but this rarely happens. Overall, preterm babies who are given probiotics have fewer infections.

## What probiotic will my baby receive?

- We give babies FloraBABY. This product has been approved by Health Canada (as a Natural Health Product) and the Neonatal Nurseries team.

## What happens when my baby goes home or is transferred to another hospital?

- If you wish, you can continue giving your baby probiotics at home. You can buy probiotics (such as FloraBABY) in most pharmacies and grocery stores. Ask your pharmacist if you need help finding probiotics for your baby.
- If your baby is transferred to another hospital, please talk with their health care team about the possibility of continuing probiotics. If they agree, you may have to provide the probiotics, as not all hospitals stock this product.

**If you have any questions or concerns about probiotics,  
please speak to your healthcare team.**