

Probiotics

For our most premature babies

This handout explains probiotics, and why they are given to the most premature infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

What are probiotics?

Probiotics are a mixture of live bacteria. When eaten, probiotics support the “good” bacteria naturally found in the intestines of healthy people. This “good” bacteria is needed for normal digestion.

Probiotics:

- Replace “bad” bacteria in the intestines with a healthier balance and mixture of bacteria
- Are used in foods such as live-culture yogurts and some cheeses

Why are probiotics given to babies?

Studies show that probiotics help prevent an intestinal problem called *necrotising enterocolitis* (NEC). This problem is more common in very premature infants than in full-term babies.

NEC can cause damage to an infant’s intestines. Sometimes, surgery is needed to repair this damage.

Probiotics help babies develop “good” intestinal bacteria that lower the risk of NEC.

How are probiotics given to my baby?

Probiotics come in a capsule. The nurse opens this capsule and pours the probiotics into a feeding syringe. The nurse then adds 1 teaspoon (about 3 to 5 milliliters) of breast milk or formula to the syringe.

This mixture of probiotics and milk or formula is then given to the baby through a feeding tube. This is done once a day.



Probiotics are given to very premature babies once a day.

Are probiotics safe?

Yes! Probiotics have been studied in great depth in NICUs around the world. Over 6,000 infants have received probiotics in these studies. None of these infants developed any infections related to the probiotics.

Probiotics used in the NICU are produced by companies that specialize in safe and reliable culturing of nutritional supplements.

Which probiotics will be given to my baby?

NICU staff researched probiotics that are packaged according to “good manufacturing process” standards in the USA. Based on this research, we chose Jarro-Dophilus Original. This brand of probiotics contains a mixture of 6 different *lactobacillus* and *bifidobacterium* species of bacteria.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Talk with a member of your baby’s healthcare team if you have questions or concerns.

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