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Infant probiotic | What to Look for

By Dr. Ted Jablonski, family physician

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Probiotics have become a trendy topic in the adult health world. These live, safe microorganisms, or “friendly bacteria,” have been shown to be helpful in ensuring a healthy gut (digestive tract) and more.^[i]

For adults, probiotics can be found in certain fermented foods (like yogurt, miso and sauerkraut) and natural health products. Are probiotics beneficial for babies too?

Probiotics in babies

The good news is that in babies, probiotics can provide certain [health benefits](#) ^{[6],[ii]} contributing to the development of healthy gut flora and a strong immune system. These two benefits are essential for babies, considering how vulnerable new babies are after birth, and how critical the early months are in their development.

Sources of infant probiotics

The [key source](#) ^[7] of probiotics for babies is **breast milk**. Doctors agree that [breastfeeding](#) ^[8] is the best way to provide probiotics to babies.

For parents who cannot, or choose not to breastfeed, **formula** feeding provides vital nutrients and energy. Babies fed with formula may benefit from probiotics.

Here are three things to look for in an infant probiotic formula:

1. **Probiotic type**

Different types of probiotic bacteria may provide health benefits. Bifidobacteria are one type of good bacteria^[iii] and account for up to 90% of the total naturally occurring bacteria found in the gut of healthy, breastfed babies.^{[iv],[v]} [Nestlé® Good Start® Plus Baby Formula](#) ^[9] contains *B. lactis*, a common type of Bifidobacteria that has been clinically shown to support a healthy digestive tract flora.

2. **Supports brain and eye development**

[DHA](#) ^[10], or docosahexaenoic acid, is an Omega-3 fatty acid that is essential for a healthy brain. In babies, DHA helps to support baby’s normal brain and eye development.^[vi]

3. **Small proteins**

Choosing a formula with small proteins, like 100% whey protein, partially broken down, can help your baby have softer stools, compared to formulas with whole proteins.^[vii] This means that the protein is already partially digested for your baby's developing tummy.

Talk to your doctor about breastfeeding and about safe and effective sources of probiotics for your baby.

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[6] <https://www.nestlebaby.ca/en/probiotics/role-probiotics-babys-immunity>

[7] <https://www.nestlebaby.ca/en/probiotics/what-are-best-sources-your-infant>

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- [10] <https://www.nestlebaby.ca/en/0-6-months/breastfeeding/baby-nutrition-and-feeding-your-guide>
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