

Study examines probiotic use in preventing gastrointestinal disorders in infants

January 13 2014

Giving an infant a probiotic during the first three months of life appears to reduce the onset of gastrointestinal disorders and result in lower associated costs, according to a study by Flavia Indrio, M.D., of the Aldo Moro University of Bari, Italy, and colleagues.

Infant colic, acid reflux and [constipation](#) are the most common [gastrointestinal disorders](#) that lead to a pediatrician referral during the first six months of life. They are often responsible for hospitalization, feeding changes, use of drugs, parental anxiety and loss of parental working days, according to the study background.

Researchers randomized 554 newborns in nine pediatric units in Italy to the probiotic *Lactobacillus reuteri* DSM 17938 (*L reuteri* DSM 17938) or placebo for 90 days, and asked parents to record in diary entries the number of vomiting episodes and evacuations (emptying of the bowels), the duration of inconsolable crying and the number of [pediatrician](#) visits. Change in daily crying time, vomiting, constipation and the cost benefits of probiotic supplement use was measured during the three month period.

At three months of age, the average duration of crying time (38 vs. 71 minutes), regurgitations (2.9 vs. 4.6) and evacuations per day (4.2 vs. 3.6) differed in the probiotic and placebo groups, respectively. Probiotic use also was associated with a nearly \$119 average savings per patient in each family.

"Driving a change of colonization during the first weeks of life through giving lactobacilli may promote an improvement in intestinal permeability; visceral sensitivity and mast cell density and probiotic administration may represent a new strategy for preventing these conditions, at least in predisposed children," the authors conclude.

More information: *JAMA Pediatr.* Published online January 13, 2014.
[DOI: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.4367](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.4367)

Provided by The JAMA Network Journals

Citation: Study examines probiotic use in preventing gastrointestinal disorders in infants (2014, January 13) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-01-probiotic-gastrointestinal-disorders-infants.html>

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