

What are probiotics?

Probiotics are harmless bacteria that live in our gastrointestinal tract to help keep our intestines healthy. Probiotics can stop harmful bacteria growing in the intestine and can help prevent medical conditions such as diarrhea (gastroenteritis) and necrotising enterocolitis (NEC).

Probiotics are found naturally in foods such as 'live' yogurts and some cheeses. Probiotics thrive in the intestine of term breast-fed babies, but can be easily destroyed by antibiotics. They are also included in some modern infant milk formulas.

How can probiotics help your baby?

Probiotics have been shown to reduce the number of preterm babies who develop NEC and also the number of preterm babies who die because of NEC.

Are there any risks with giving probiotics to your baby?

Clinical trial results indicate that it is safe to use probiotics in preterm babies. There are no published side effects or infections when using probiotics in preterm babies. There is always the chance that there are risks with using probiotics that we don't know about. However the benefits are very significant so we cannot envisage any harm that would outweigh them.

What is Infloran?

Infloran is the brand of probiotic that will be prescribed for your baby. Infloran contains *Bifidobacterium bifidum* and *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, both bacteria which are commonly found in the stool of breastfed infants. A Randomised Controlled Trial with over 400 very low birthweight infants has shown that Infloran can halve the risk of developing the serious intestine disease necrotising enterocolitis (NEC) and can halve the risk of death. Infloran is not registered for use in New Zealand. This is because it is a new product which has not yet attracted a drug company to sponsor it through the regulatory process in New Zealand. This is not an uncommon situation with medications used in the newborn. This medicine has been approved for use by the Auckland District Health Board.