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Are there any situations where probiotics may be stopped early?

If your baby is very unwell, we will stop giving probiotics and milk feeds to 'rest' the gut and reduce the risk of any bacteria transferring across the gut and causing infection.

Additional information

If you have any questions or want to discuss your options further, please speak with the neonatal team looking after your baby.

PERIPrem Cymru

A national care pathway aimed at reducing deaths and brain injury related to prematurity in Wales.

Several charities provide information and resources for parents of babies born premature or sick in the UK including:

www.bliss.org.uk
www.tommys.org

You can find out more information about necrotising enterocolitis (NEC) here: <https://necsociety.org>

To find out more about PERIPrem Cymru or to share your experience, visit our website with this QR code.



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Probiotics for Babies Born Preterm

Protecting preterm babies and supporting a healthy gut

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Who is this leaflet for?

This information is for parents of babies who are born **before 32 weeks gestation**, or before 37 weeks gestation and weighing less than 1500g, who will receive probiotics as part of their neonatal care.

What are probiotics?

Probiotics are supplements that contain friendly bacteria which **increase survival** in babies born preterm. Probiotics **help to protect against a serious gut condition**, called necrotising enterocolitis (NEC), that can be associated with being born preterm.

NEC is a serious life-threatening condition where the gut tissue becomes inflamed and infected causing babies to become very unwell and sometimes require surgery. Babies who develop NEC face higher risks of long-term developmental problems.

What are the benefits of probiotics?

Reduces risk of death by more than 30%

Reduces risk of serious gut condition (NEC) by 66%

May reduce the risk of late infections

Can help transition to milk feeding more quickly

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How are probiotics given?

Probiotics are given as a small amount of liquid by mouth, or through your baby's feeding tube, into their tummy. It is given once a day until your baby reaches 34 weeks corrected age.

How do probiotics work?

Babies born early are at risk of developing abnormal patterns of harmful bacteria in their gut for a variety of reasons compared to babies born at term. Probiotics encourage the development of healthy patterns of gut bacteria.

Encouraging the development of the right bacteria in your baby's gut soon after birth helps protect against NEC.

Use of an appropriate probiotic after birth is



- Safe for your baby
- Proven to benefit babies born early

What are the potential risks of probiotics?

There is a very small risk of severe infection caused by the probiotic bacteria themselves. The significant benefits for preterm babies receiving probiotics, in terms of improved survival and protection against NEC, outweighs this very small risk.

There are lots of studies that show probiotics are beneficial for babies born very small and very preterm. However, these studies have not included many babies born at 22 and 23 weeks gestation to date.