

## Probiotics in Newborn babies

This leaflet provides information for the parents of babies born small and prematurely about the use of regular probiotic treatment.

### **What is the medication called and what is it used for?**

Probiotics are harmless bacteria that live in our gut and help to keep our intestines healthy. Probiotics can stop harmful bacteria growing in the intestines and can help prevent conditions such as Necrotising Entero-Colitis (NEC).

The treatment contains the friendly bacteria that would usually be found in the intestines of breast-fed babies born at term and it is similar to drinking live yoghurt products. The bacteria are obtained by purifying a yoghurt-type liquid so that your baby does not receive the milk part of the yoghurt.

We are using **LaBiNIC™** probiotic for the eligible group of babies on our unit.

### **How is it taken?**

The product is given with a small amount of expressed breast milk or donor breast milk feeds.

### **How often should it be taken?**

In babies born at less than 32 weeks gestation, it is given daily until your baby reaches 34 weeks corrected age. Babies with a very low birth weight, born at less than 37 weeks gestation are given this treatment until discharge.

### **What are the benefits?**

Preterm babies frequently have unusual bacteria in their intestines, often because of other treatments that we need to use, such as antibiotics. These unusual bacteria can increase the risks of serious diseases such as NEC, which is a severe inflammatory disease of the bowel. Probiotics work by replacing these unusual bacteria with normal bacteria, and by strengthening your baby's immune response to infection.

There is good research evidence that probiotics protect babies, reduce NEC by 30%, and improve a baby's ability to tolerate milk feeds.

### **What are the side effects?**

Research has shown probiotics to be safe. There are no known risks or side effects to taking probiotics. If your baby did become unwell, or if their feeds are stopped for any reason, then the treatment may be paused temporarily.

### **What are the alternatives?**

There are no alternatives to probiotics, however there are several different brands who supply them. If you would like further information on the probiotic your baby is receiving, please speak to the nurse/doctor looking after your baby.

### **Who to contact if you have any more questions?**

Please feel free to discuss this with the nurse caring for your baby or the consultant on duty, who will answer any queries you might have.

**This leaflet can be made available in different formats on request. If you would like to make any suggestions or comments about the content of this leaflet, then please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0151 702 4353 or by email at [pals@lwh.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@lwh.nhs.uk)**

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