

Infant and follow-on formula: no evidence for health benefits of probiotic additives

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Some manufacturers of infant and follow-on formula offer their products with added probiotics. Probiotics are bacteria which are said to have positive effects on the health of infants. For example, manufacturers claim that infections are less frequent in infants who are fed these products.

The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) has assessed the safety and possible benefits of infant and follow-on formula containing strains of probiotic bacteria currently used in Germany.

The institute concludes that for some strains of bacteria, only very few studies involving healthy infants have been conducted. However, there are no indications from the currently available study results to suggest that these strains have any unwanted effects on healthy infants. In the view of the BfR, further data from well planned and controlled intervention studies would nevertheless be required to make reliable judgements on the safety of these microorganisms in the routine use in infant formula.

The BfR additionally draws attention to the fact that it is not possible to infer on the basis of the available data that infant and follow-on formula to which the assessed strains of bacteria have been added have any health benefits for infants. This means that for **healthy babies**, infant formula enriched with probiotics is not superior to products without probiotics.

The full version of this BfR Opinion is available in German on <http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/saeuglingsanfangs-und-folgenahrung-gesundheitlicher-nutzen-von-probiotischen-zusaetzen-ist-nicht-belegt.pdf>