

Probiotics During Pregnancy Can Reduce Allergies in Children

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Children born to mothers who consume milk and yogurt fortified with probiotics during pregnancy may receive added protection against allergies, according to the results of a study presented on February 24, 2013, at the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas.

The study analyzed the food habits of almost 41,000 pregnant women from the Norwegian Mother and Child Cohort Study. Participating mothers completed food and lifestyle questionnaires during their pregnancies. After birth, parents reported on incidences of eczema, hay fever, asthma, and lower respiratory tract infections when their children were 6, 18, and 36 months old. The researchers also collected data on the mother's age, education, smoking status, and history of asthma and allergy.

The results showed that children born to mothers who consumed milk or yogurt products containing probiotic lactobacilli during pregnancy had a 7% reduced risk for eczema at 6 months of age and a 12% reduced risk for hay fever at age 18 to 36 months. There was no change in the risk for asthma development.

The researchers suspect that breast-feeding in conjunction with consumption of probiotic bacteria may have also contributed to the reduced allergy risk. Previous studies have shown that probiotics consumed by mothers can combine with breast milk and increase interleukin-10 levels, potentially weakening allergic reactions in infants.

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