

## Childhood Constipation



Constipation is often considered as the most common gastrointestinal disorder in children and is usually associated with low-fibre intake. Most constipated children (90–95%) suffer from functional constipation<sup>3,6</sup>, characterized by decreased bowel movements and/or hard stools, which cause significant distress for children and their caregivers. “Functional” implies the absence of organic causes with a focus on behavioural aspects<sup>1</sup>.

During infancy, the transition from breastfeeding to formula feeding or the introduction of solid foods is sometimes a trigger for the onset of functional constipation<sup>10</sup>. Symptoms of functional constipation include infrequent depositions, possibly painful, and large and hard stools with or without faecal incontinence. Regarding therapeutic options, some evidence exists about prebiotic dietary fibre and their benefits on intestinal functions<sup>3</sup>.

## Prebiotics may help babies with constipation

Breast-fed infants have an intestinal microbiota dominated by Bifidobacterium and Lactobacillus and this is quite different from those fed with a standard infant formula<sup>5</sup>. Breastmilk is gifted with both prebiotic and probiotic properties which standard infant formula doesn't. Today's infant formulas are often fortified with prebiotics to better mimic properties of human milk with respect to its effect on gastrointestinal microbiota composition and function<sup>2</sup>.

The effectiveness of prebiotics is due to their ability to resist digestion and to reach the large intestine, where they are completely fermented by the gut microbiota and are leading to a selective increase of beneficial bacteria<sup>8</sup>. Infants on these supplemented formula with prebiotics inulin and oligofructose have a lower stool pH, a better stool consistency and frequency and a higher concentration of bifidobacteria in their intestine compared to infants on a non-supplemented standard formula<sup>4,7,9</sup>.

## Conclusion

Supplementing the baby's diet with prebiotic inulin-type fructans seems to be promising for treating functional constipation in infants and young children<sup>3</sup>. At DPO International, we are honoured to be in partnership with **Beneo Orafiti** to bring you a wide range of ingredient choices that will elevate the nutritional quality of your baby food products.

## References

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DPO International Sdn Bhd. (OHQ)  
(Reg No: 200501000075 (677120 - X))  
DPO House, B2-G, Lorong Selangor,  
Pusat Komersial Gaya,  
Pusat Bandar Melawati, 53100  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

T. +603 4108 1282  
F. +603 4108 1262