

# Lactobacillus reuteri may have multiple benefits as a probiotic in premature infants

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A new study finds that supplementing enteral nutrition with *Lactobacillus reuteri* (*L. reuteri*) DSM 17938 as a probiotic may reduce the risk of necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC) in premature infants. NEC is a condition where portions of the bowel undergo tissue death. It is the second most common cause of death among premature infants.

The study, published today in the OnlineFirst version of the *Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition* (*JPEN*), the research journal of the American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (A.S.P.E.N.), is a [systematic review](#) of [randomized controlled trials](#) (RCTs) and non-RCTs of *L. reuteri* DSM 17938 supplementation in premature infants born at a gestational age of less than 37 weeks. Studies comparing enteral administration of any dose of *L. reuteri* DSM 17938 or mother strain *L. reuteri* ATCC 55730 within the first 10 days of life and continued for at least 7 days with placebo or control were eligible for inclusion. Studies comparing *L. reuteri* DSM 17938 with another probiotic were also included. In the end, 6 RCTs and 2 non-RCTs were included.

The results from the RCTs showed a statistically insignificant improvement in NEC, while the non-RCTs showed significant improvement. Overall, this systematic review suggests that *L. reuteri* DSM 17938 supplementation has the potential not only to reduce the risk of NEC but also to facilitate enteral nutrition in [premature infants](#). However, larger definitive studies are needed to confirm these findings.

Provided by American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition

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