

Probiotic supplements may enhance weight loss in obese children

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Probiotic supplements may enhance weight loss and improve the metabolic health of obese children following a diet and exercise plan, according to research presented today at the 58th Annual European Society for Paediatric Endocrinology Meeting. The findings of this small trial suggest that probiotic supplements may help obese children lose body weight and also reduce their risk of future metabolic conditions, including type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Obesity in childhood and adolescence represents a major, growing, health problem worldwide, which can lead to the development of expensive, serious and debilitating complications, including heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Probiotics are live microorganisms thought to have [health benefits](#) through improving or restoring the diversity of our gut bacteria, also known as the microbiome. Although some studies have reported benefits of probiotic consumption for health and [weight loss](#) in adults, its effectiveness has not been fully investigated in obese children.

In this study, Professor Rui-Min Chen and colleagues at Fuzhou Children's Hospital of Fujian, China, conducted a randomised, double-blind trial of probiotic effects on the health of obese children, aged 6-14 years old. All 54 study participants were following a reduced-calorie diet combined with an exercise regime. Their [body weight](#) and markers of metabolic health ([blood lipid levels](#), [blood glucose levels](#), insulin levels and inflammatory markers) were measured before and at the end of the 12 week study. Children treated with [probiotic supplements](#) lost significantly more weight and had lower levels of markers that indicate

poor metabolic health.

Prof Chen states, "Our findings suggest that probiotic supplementation may help with weight loss and improve metabolic health in obese children, and that this may be an effective strategy for the prevention and treatment of obesity in the future."

Although Prof Chen, cautions, "More work is needed to confirm these findings, our number of participants was small and limited to the Fujian area. Other studies have also reported no benefits from probiotic treatment in obese children but these were much shorter in duration. So, further investigation is needed before any medical recommendations can be made."

The team now plan to conduct larger trials examining the effect of probiotics on the metabolic health of [obese children](#), and to extend their investigations to analyse how they alter the gut, with the aim of better understanding the link between gut bacteria and obesity risk.

Prof Chen comments, "Childhood obesity is a growing problem that needs early intervention to prevent long-term health problems; microbiome-based treatments could be a new and more effective strategy for tackling this serious epidemic."

More information: The study "Effect of Probiotics intake on obese children" will be presented by Prof Rui-Min Chen on Friday 20 September (abstract P1-191), at the 58th Annual European Society for Paediatric Endocrinology Meeting in Vienna, Austria.

www.eurospe.org/meetings/2019/espe2019/programme/

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