

What you eat as an infant shapes your gut microbiome for years

As soon as we are born, the collection of bacteria that colonize and collaborate with our digestive system starts to develop and evolve. Many different dietary factors, including how long we are breastfed and what we eat when we switch to solid foods, affect this developing colony. The influence of our early dietary experiences persist through childhood and have effects on our metabolism, report a team of researchers in Europe and China.

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Previous research has shown that breast feeding can influence a baby's gut microbiome, but this new study shows that those effects can persist and can also lead to metabolic differences.

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Breastfeeding for longer and higher amounts of plant-based foods after weaning were associated with gut microbiota with more *Bacteroides* or *Prevotella* strains, which produce carbohydrate-degrading enzymes that help break down and digest plant fiber. Children who were breastfed for a shorter time and whose diet had higher amounts of total fat and sugar had simpler gut microbiomes, which were enriched in *Bifidobacterium* strains that favor simple sugars over complex carbohydrates.

The study's findings "could mean different things," bioinformatician [Sofia Forslund](#) of the Max Delbrück Centre for Molecular Medicine cautions. Is it the properties of breast milk itself or does breast feeding act as a proxy for some other variable that influences microbiome composition?

Read full, original post: [Children's early diets influence gut microbiome](#)