

## **Probiotic prevents dental caries**

By Alan R. Gaby, M.D.

One hundred thirteen mother-child pairs were randomly assigned to receive, in single-blind fashion, the probiotic *Lactobacillus reuteri* strain ATCC 55730 (derived from breast milk) or placebo. The mothers received 5 drops of oil daily containing  $10^8$  colony-forming units during the last month of gestation, and then the children received the same daily dose during the first year of life. At 9 years of age, the proportion of children who were free of dental caries was significantly higher in the probiotic group than in the placebo group (82% vs. 58%;  $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, there were fewer sites with gingivitis in the probiotic group than in the placebo group ( $p < 0.05$ ).

This study demonstrates that daily administration of *L. reuteri* ATCC 55730 during the last 4 weeks of pregnancy and during the first year of the child's life can decrease the prevalence of dental caries and the severity of gingivitis at 9 years of age. *L. reuteri* strain ATCC 55730 was renamed *L. reuteri* DSM 17938. It is sold in the United States under the brand name Gerber Soothe Colic Drops. The product should not be exposed to temperatures above 77° F., and should therefore be shipped cold during the summer.

Reference: Stensson M, Koch G, Coric S, et al. Oral administration of *Lactobacillus reuteri* during the first year of life reduces caries prevalence in the primary dentition at 9 years of age. *Caries Res* 2014;48:111-117.