

An Investigation into Parental Awareness of the Importance of Gut Health in Infancy and of the Effect of Mode of Delivery and Gestational Age on their Infant's Gut Health.

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The establishment of the microbiome during the first 1000 days is crucial for health and development^{1,2}. However, optimal microbial colonisation is compromised for preterm infants and infants delivered via caesarean section^{2,3}. This study aims to investigate parental awareness around infantile gut health to assess gaps in the education provided by healthcare professionals (HCPs).

A 15-item questionnaire was distributed to parents of infants (0-12 months), via 'everymum.ie'. Descriptive statistics were conducted through IBM SPSS V29, using Frequencies, Cross-tabulations, and Pearson Chi-Squares tests.

Of the total sample (n=933), 76% did not receive information from their HCP on the importance of their infant having a healthy gut. Only 15% of parents received this information before their infant's birth and 22% received this information after.

Of the 364 parents who had a c-section, 70% were not aware that mode of delivery was linked to their infant's gut health and 73% did not receive information on the importance of their infant having a healthy gut. Of those who had a preterm infant (n=64), 22% received information after the birth on the importance of gut health in infants. There was no significant difference in the information provided to those with or without a preterm infant, and those who gave birth vaginally or via c-section, where $p=0.950$ and $p=0.824$, respectively.

This study highlights gaps in parental knowledge around infantile gut health and in the education provided by HCPs. Further support appears necessary to deliver this message to parents to reduce the burden of health problems during infancy.

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References

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