New Study: Babies Fed Infant Formula With 2'-FL Human Milk Oligosaccharide+ Had Immune Response More Like Breastfed Babies

- Levels of five immune markers were nearly identical in breastfed babies and babies fed formula with 2'-FL human milk oligosaccharide

- Human milk oligosaccharides, special prebiotics found naturally in breast milk, support gut health and some also circulate in the bloodstream

- Backed by more than 15 years of research, Abbott is the first company to add 2'-FL human milk oligosaccharide to infant formula

ABBOTT PARK, Ill., Oct. 26, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- Good nutrition helps build the foundation for a child's ability to learn, grow and thrive. For babies, the best nutrition is breast milk – there's nothing in the world like it – in part due to special prebiotics called human milk oligosaccharides (HMOs). HMOs, found naturally in breast milk, feed good bacteria in the gut. Researchers believe they may be one of the main reasons breastfeeding provides immune health benefits. Now, a new study offers news about HMOs for parents who need or choose to use infant formula.

The study, published today in the *Journal of Nutrition*, shows that babies fed infant formula with a structurally identical version of 2'-fucosyllactose (2'-FL), the most abundant HMO found in most human milk, had an immune response more like breastfed babies.[1]

Immune Support For Formula-Fed Babies
The prospective, randomized, double-blind clinical study looked at the immune response of 200 babies divided into feeding groups – exclusively breastfed, formula-fed without 2'-FL HMO and formula-fed with 2'-FL HMO. After six weeks, results showed that when comparing the breastfed group to the group fed formula without 2'-FL HMO, the levels of five immune markers were statistically different. Levels of these same markers, however, were nearly identical between the breastfed group and the group fed formula with 2'-FL HMO.[1]

"The first year of life is an important window for immune system development," saidEdward Barrett, Ph.D., study author and Director of Translational Research at Lovelace Biomedical, part of the Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute. "These data are compelling for doctors and parents alike because we were able to show that the formula with 2'-FL HMO narrowed the gap between breast milk and formula in ways never seen before. We tested a number of immune markers, and found that specific signals of immune responses were the same in the breastfed and 2'-FL-formula fed babies."

Excluding water, HMOs are the third most abundant ingredient in breast milk after fat and carbohydrates. There are hundreds of HMOs in human milk, and they are more than 100 times more abundant in breast milk than cow's milk.[2] Like other prebiotics, HMOs support gut health, where 70 percent of the immune system exists.[3] But, studies show that 2'-FL HMO also circulates in the bloodstream throughout the body.[4]

"Nothing can replace breast milk. But for those moms who need or choose to use formula, we are committed to providing the most scientifically advanced nutrition," said Rachael Buck, Ph.D., associate research fellow at Abbott and study author. "This latest research has led us to our biggest scientific breakthrough in infant formula in nearly a decade – the ability to nourish formula-fed babies with 2'-FL HMO. While it doesn't mean babies won't experience the normal illnesses that come with childhood, these data clearly show that formula with 2'-FL HMO can help strengthen babies' immune systems to be more like breastfed babies."

The formula used in the study is available at major U.S. retailers and theAbbott store as Similac® Pro-Advance™ and Similac Pro-Sensitive™, both non-GMO. Abbott is the first company to add an HMO to infant formula.

With more than 90 years of experience, Abbott conducts ongoing research to give babies the strongest possible start in the first year of life. Abbott is dedicated to unconditional nourishment and continues to offer parents new feeding options. Learn more about the science and benefits of HMOs on the Abbott nutrition newsroom.

About Abbott:
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