PROBIOTICS- INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

What are probiotics?
Probiotics are bacteria that live in our gastrointestinal tract and help keep our intestines healthy. Probiotics can stop harmful bacteria growing in the intestine and can help prevent a serious bowel disease that preterm babies are at high risk of developing called necrotising enterocolitis (NEC).

Probiotics are found naturally in foods such as ‘live’ yogurts and some cheeses. Probiotics thrive in the intestine of term breast-fed babies, but can be easily destroyed by antibiotics. They are also included in some modern infant milk formulas.

How can probiotics help your baby?
Preterm babies who receive probiotics are less likely to develop NEC, less likely to die from NEC and less likely to develop serious infections.

Are there any risks with giving probiotics to your baby?
Clinical trial results indicate that it is safe to use probiotics in preterm babies. There is a very small risk of infection from a bacteria in the probiotic, but, overall, babies who receive probiotics are less likely to develop infection. There is always the chance that there are risks with using probiotics that we don’t know about. However, the benefits are very significant so there is unlikely to be any harm that would outweigh them.

What is Labinic?
Labinic is the brand of probiotic that will be prescribed for your baby. Labinic contains Lactobacillus acidophilus, Bifidobacterium bifidum and Bifidobacterium infantis all bacteria which are commonly found in the stool of breastfed infants. Labinic is not registered for use in New Zealand. This is because it is a new product which is used in a very small population. The costs for a medicine to go through the regulatory process in New Zealand are significant, and for products with a very small market it is often not economically viable for a company to obtain registration. This is a common situation with medications used in babies, children, or rare conditions.