New Study Demonstrates 4 Year Olds Fed Enfamil LIPIL® as Infants Have Brain and Eye Outcomes Similar to Breastfed Babies

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Reinforces Importance of DHA/ARA in Infant Diet

EVANSVILLE, Ind.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--A recently published study of 4 year olds who had been fed Enfamil LIPIL® infant formula exclusively for their first 17 weeks of life has become the longest-term analysis of its kind to demonstrate breastfed-equivalent visual and IQ outcomes among formula-fed infants.1 The study, which appeared in the journal Early Human Development, was funded by a grant from the National Institutes of Health.

"What this study means for parents is that we now have even longer-term evidence that DHA and ARA supplementation at the levels in Enfamil LIPIL is associated with visual acuity and brain development benefits similar to breast milk," said Deborah Diersen-Schade, Ph.D., a research fellow at Mead Johnson Nutritionals. Previously, brain and eye development outcomes similar to breast milk had been followed in the same group of infants out to 18 months of age.2,3

DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) and ARA (arachidonic acid) are nutrients known as "long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (LCPUFA)" that are present in breast milk. They are critical for development of the eyes, brain and central nervous system. They begin accumulating in the infant’s tissues during gestation, especially during the third trimester. Recent evidence suggests that they continue to support the development of visual acuity throughout the first full year of life.4

Dr. Diersen-Schade emphasized that the new study addresses two other issues that are important for parents and physicians -- those issues being DHA and ARA levels and control group outcomes.

"The levels of DHA and ARA in Enfamil LIPIL were derived from our evaluation of the levels of both nutrients in human milk worldwide," she said. "The results that Dr. Birch and her colleagues obtained from this analysis as well as earlier positive results from previous studies are based on formulas with DHA at those levels. Researchers who have conducted studies of infant formula that included lower levels have not consistently demonstrated improved outcomes when compared with formula not containing DHA and ARA."5,6

Regarding control group outcomes, Diersen-Schade explained that the recent Birch study, which enrolled infants born from 1993 to 1995, also included a control group of infants who received Enfamil with Iron as it was available at the time without DHA and ARA supplementation.

"There were significant differences in visual acuity and verbal IQ scores in the control group versus the breastfed group," she said. "That's important, but what's meaningful is that the similar outcomes for Enfamil LIPIL compared to breast milk were still observable at 4 years of age. Equally interesting, the DHA and ARA group was fed Enfamil LIPIL for only four months; yet their results were similar to infants who were breastfed on average for 10 months."

John Colombo, Ph.D., associate director for cognitive neuroscience and professor of psychology at the University of Kansas, said that the Birch study provides long-awaited data about the links between fatty acids in the infant diet and measures of cognitive function, such as IQ. "Quite simply, these data are the clearest evidence yet that show the beneficial effects of LCPUFA on cognitive and intellectual development -- and that LCPUFA should be part of the nutritional regimen in early life," he said. "These results suggest that formulas supplemented with these levels of LCPUFA produce gains in cognitive and intellectual function over formulas without these levels."

About Mead Johnson

Mead Johnson Nutritionals is a world leader in nutrition, dedicated to helping provide infants and children with the best start in life. Mead Johnson Nutritionals is a Bristol-Myers Squibb company.

References


SOURCE: Mead Johnson

CONTACT: Gail Wood, +1-812-429-5703, gail.wood@bms.com, for Mead Johnson

Web site: http://www.bms.com/

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