



19 SEP, 2019

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Daily Telegraph, Sydney

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BABIES born naturally have different gut bacteria than those delivered by caesarean, new research has found.

In the largest study into newborn microbiota, Melbourne researchers found babies born vaginally get most of their gut bacteria from their mum's gut — not the birth canal.

C-section infants, however, carry more bacteria commonly found in a hospital environment, including those with antimicrobial resistance.

Lead researcher Dr Samuel Forster from the Hudson Institute of Medical Research, said they were now preparing to recruit 20,000 babies to further look at the ideal make-up of gut bacteria, and see if this initial difference in the newborn period affected long-term health.

If so, it paves the way for treatment in the first few days of life to correct the bacterial mix.

This collection of trillions of microorganisms in the gut are becoming implicated in the development of everything from obesity and diabetes, to allergic and auto-immune diseases.

“At this stage we know that there are striking differences between the two groups. But it may well be that there are ben-

efits of both bacterial communities,” Dr Forster said.

“We use probiotics already. If we knew the right window and what we should be putting in, then we could help the baby develop the optimal immune system.”

Amy Biernacki (pictured) gave birth to daughter Sienna by emergency caesarean at 32 weeks four months ago when

her baby — then weighing 665g, and the size expected at 24 weeks gestation — stopped growing.

“We didn't have a choice, they had to deliver her on the spot,” Ms Biernacki said.

“It would be really beneficial to intervene early on for babies like Sienna. Premmie babies particularly need extra help from the start.”

