



Nourished Baby

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By Heather Dessinger of The Mommypotamus

This book is dedicated to my husband Daniel, who started Mommypotamus against my will, set up Twitter accounts without my knowledge, and then harassed me until I wrote. Thank you, my love, for seeing in me what I could not see in myself, and for the sacrifices you have made to bring my dreams to life.

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About Mommypotamus



Hi there. I'm Heather, the [Mommypotamus](#). This is where you read a little about me, so here goes:

I'm a mom. I have two beautiful children that were waterborn in my living room. You can read their stories [here](#) and [here](#).

I'm a researcher. Questioning the status quo comes naturally to me, which is why I rely on evidence-based research to guide my decisions on food, vaccinations, birth, full-term breastfeeding and a bunch of other topics.

Why did I write this book? You may have noticed when I introduced myself that I'm not a doctor or certified nutritionist. There are no special letters behind my name. I'm just a mom that's passionate about nourishing my family in every way possible.

I wasn't always this way, though. Daddypotamus and I were junk food fiends when we got married. Part of every dinner came from a box or takeout, and we were fine with that. But years of eating MSG, genetically modified foods, and hormone "enhanced" meat took its toll. About two years after we said our vows – just when we were thinking about starting a family - I developed a debilitating autoimmune disorder.

Blood tests also revealed that years of low-fat dieting had lowered my cholesterol to nearly undetectable levels – lower than those long distance runners who don't get periods. It's embarrassing to admit now, but when I first heard the numbers I thought it was a good thing! *Um, no.* Cholesterol is necessary for producing the hormones that sustain a pregnancy, I was told. "Don't get pregnant, you're not strong enough to carry a baby to term" were her exact words.

Fine, then. I went home and drank 8 oz of oil straight up. (*Do not ever do this! You will puke for 10 hours!*)

I wanted cholesterol. I wanted a baby. I wanted my horrible acne, acid reflux, anxiety and chronic exhaustion to just GO AWAY. I wanted all of those things and more, but what I NEEDED was **real food**.

So, with [Nourishing Traditions](#) in hand, I hacked away at my old food habits until every single one was gone. No one else I knew was eating this way and honestly I kind of felt like the unabomber while concocting ferments in my kitchen.

It was frustrating, but *oh-so-worth-it*. Through nutrition and laser therapy I recovered my health, got pregnant, carried my baby not only to term but to the **very last day of the forty second week**, nursed for two years, got pregnant AGAIN, continued to nurse through my pregnancy, had another baby at 41 weeks. I now have three year old and a one year old and have been continually nursing for 46 months straight. That's a far cry from not being able to carry a baby to term!

Food is THAT powerful. And we as parents wield that power for our children. I don't know about you, but in a world where McDonald's scrambled eggs contain [20+ ingredients](#) - instead of just, *you know*, EGGS -I can't say I put much trust in the industrial food complex to do right by our kids. If ever a generation needed real, nourishing food, it is the one we are raising. This book will help you get started.

Chapter 1: Baby Biology 101



Did you know that the ACTUAL BIRTH EXPERIENCE can affect a child's cravings . . . *for life?*

Sounds crazy, I know, but it's true! That sacred, life-changing, *point-your-bum-at-your-mother-in-law-and-push experience* is more than we could possibly have imagined. Here's why: As far as science knows, babies digestive tracts are sterile while they're happily bebopping in our bellies.¹ No bacteria. No viruses. No fungi. *Nada*.

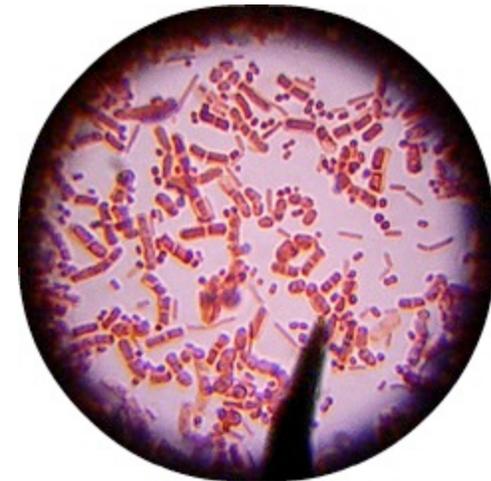
Then labor begins. As babies descend into the birth canal they get their first “meal”, a dose of the microbes/micro-flora living in their mummies *you-know*, which believe it or not can affect cravings for life. Okay, on the count of three let’s shout “**Swallowing fluids? Ewwwww!!!**” - there, I feel better. You?

Wait, Isn’t This A Book About Food??

Yep, and I promise I’m going to get to that. But [micrometabolic imprinting in infancy](#), which is the fancy term for what we’re talking about here, sets the stage for how we make use of the food we eat.

Bugs We Love

So what are these micro-flora and why are they so important? Well, in a healthy mother you will see a lot of Lactobacillus species, namely Lactobacillus acidophilus, Lactobacillus casei and Lactobacillus fermentum (plus a small amount of bad guys . . . we’ll get to them later). These beneficial bacteria perform vital functions within our bodies, such as:



- **Digesting and absorbing certain carbohydrates.** Without good gut bacteria, your body [and your baby’s body] cannot absorb certain undigested starches, fiber, and sugars. The friendly bacteria in your digestive tract convert these carbohydrates into primary sources of important energy and nutrients.
- **Producing vitamins, absorbing minerals and eliminating toxins.** Good bacteria manufacture vital nutrients such as vitamin K2 and B vitamins in our intestines . . . something we cannot do on our own. They also promote mineral absorption and aid in metabolism and the breakdown of toxins.
- **Keeping bad bacteria under control.** Simply stated, friendly bacteria compete with the bad guys for room and board, but since beneficial bacteria are more at home there, they win most of the battles for nutrition and attachment sites within your colon. The helpful bacteria also produce a substance that kills harmful microbes.
- **Preventing allergies.** Friendly bacteria train your [baby’s] immune system to distinguish between pathogens and non-harmful antigens, and to respond appropriately. This important function prevents your [baby’s] immune system from overreacting to non-harmful antigens, which is the genesis of allergies.
- **Providing vital support to your immune system.** Beneficial bacteria have a lifelong, powerful effect on your gut’s immune system and your systemic immune system as well [as your baby’s]. The bacteria play a crucial role in the

development and operation of the mucosal immune system in the digestive tract. They also aid in the production of antibodies to pathogens.

[Probiotics Found To Help Your Guts Immune System](#)

So despite what Purell might like us to believe, we need bacteria in and on our bodies to survive. But of course, that's not the whole story!

Bugs We Love . . . To Hate



Micrometabolic imprinting is an amazing thing IF you have a birth canal populated with beneficial bacteria. Unfortunately, that's not something most of us should take for granted.

We live in the age of antibiotics, the contraceptive pill, junk food, personal care products and stress . . . all of which damage beneficial bacteria and cause the dangerous stuff to thrive. These pathogens can rapidly colonize the digestive tract of newborn babies, which according to a [report](#) by Klaire Labs can lead to “**allergies, asthma**, increased susceptibility to **infections, inflammatory bowel diseases, diabetes mellitus, obesity**, and **colon cancer**.” Not to mention colic, thrush and eczema!

What can we do to make sure our babies get a good dose of healthy bacteria from the start? Introduce it directly to the birth canal, of course! Oh, you want suggestions for how to actually do this??? *Well, here you go . . .*

Easy At-Home Methods for Introducing Beneficial Bacteria to the Birth Canal

Many moms choose to do one of these methods on a daily basis in the last weeks of pregnancy:

- Insert unpasteurized, plain yogurt or kefir into the vagina with a small spoon or spatula or vaginal cream applicator. Insert at night and wear a pad.

- Insert a probiotic suppository using an encapsulated probiotic supplement such as Biokult. No need to take the probiotic out of the capsule, it will melt!

Ideas For Nurturing Beneficial Gut Flora After Birth

Don't bathe your baby immediately after birth!

Newborns that have passed through the birth canal have their mothers' good AND bad bacteria on their eyes, mouth, ears and hands that go in the mouth. As mama breastfeeds she will pass on antibodies to fight the pathogenic stuff.

However, if this bacterial mix is washed off and the baby acquires a different set of pathogenic microbes (say if the baby is taken to a nursery and washed, then exposed to a blanket that has foreign pathogens on it), the process for keeping pathogens in check becomes more complex. Baby has to pass the microbes to mama, who makes the antibodies and passes them back to baby. It's a lovely system when babies get older, but in their first days it's better to avoid that scenario and allow their bodies to recuperate from the birth experience.



Note: Both of my children were waterborn. This is different than bathing because the birthing fluids – for lack of a better term – are in the water as well. Plus, we didn't scrub them down with soap!

If at all possible, breastfeed. Studies show that the beneficial strain bifidobacteria is predominant in breastfed infants, while formula fed infants “possess a more haphazard microbiota that includes Bacteroides, staphylococci, E. coli, clostridia, and bifidobacteria.”²

And take YOUR probiotics! Mothers have specific immunological mechanisms that ensure the transfer of their own intestinal bacteria to their babies, so make sure you've got the good stuff to give!



Other Factors That Lead To Compromised Micro-Flora

There are other ways the micro-flora can be affected as well. **Hibiclens washes** (chlorahexidine), which I had when my daughter was born because I'd tested Strep B positive, wipe out the good and bad bacteria. Although she got some good bacteria by being placed on my chest immediately and nursing immediately, there was a missed opportunity to properly colonize her digestive tract.

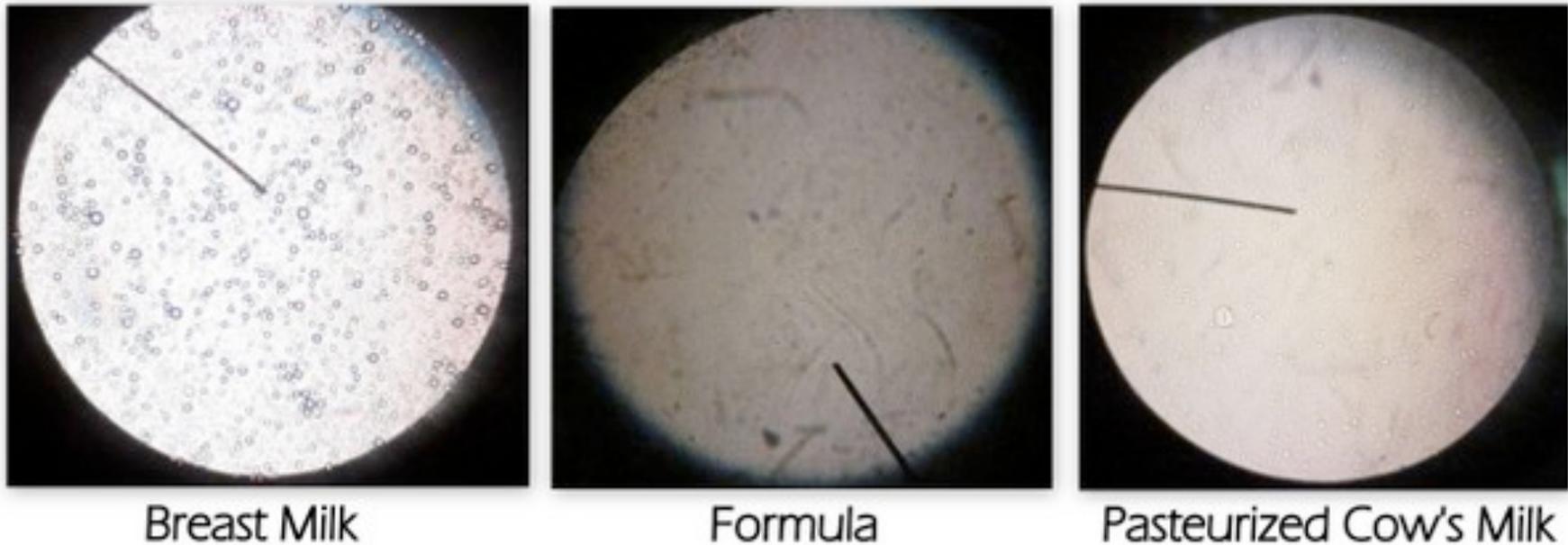
This is also the case with **caesarians**, where babies are exposed to bacteria such as clostridium and streptococcus in the operating room instead of the friendly lactobacilli bacteria.³ Antibiotics during labor or anytime thereafter kill good and bad bacteria but leave candida albicans intact.⁴ When its competition is eliminated candida thrives, often causing the dreaded thrush.

Formula feeding is another factor that can compromise healthy gut flora. According to the [Massachusetts Breastfeeding Coalition](#), breastfed and commercial formula fed infants have very different gut flora.

“On the 4th day of life breastfed infants have roughly 47% bifidobacterium in their guts. Formula fed infants have roughly 15% bifidobacterium with the majority being enterococci.”

Wait, Did I Just Throw A Bunch Of Percentages At You?

Sorry about that. What I meant to say is better illustrated in three microscopic views of my breast milk, some formula I picked up at the store and pasteurized cow's milk.



Breast Milk

Formula

Pasteurized Cow's Milk

As you can see in the first picture, breast milk is alive with glyconutrients, white blood cells, and immunobodies. Commercial formula, in contrast, is a completely dead product, often containing hydrogenated oils, high fructose corn syrup,⁵ and even traces of a chemical found in rocket fuel.⁶ Oh, and those pricier products “enhanced” with DHA and ARA? They’re created by extracting components from algae using a **neurotoxic solvent** called hexane. “When I worked in the hospital’s neonatal ward, the nurses all called it “the diarrhea formula”,”

Heather Doak, LPN, IBCLC [told](#) the Cornucopia Institute. “We’ve seen infants, tiny little humans, with diarrhea that just wouldn’t stop after being given this formula.” For infants, long-term diarrhea is considered a serious and potentially life-threatening medical event. Thumbs down, if you ask me.

Just for fun, let’s take a quick look at the cow’s milk sample, too. Although it’s not truly living thanks to pasteurization, it is still biologically similar. If breastfeeding is not an option, you may want to consider a [homemade formula](#) that takes into account the fact that human milk is richer in whey, lactose, vitamin c, niacin, and long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids than cow’s milk. Keep in mind that this is not a professional recommendation, it’s just what I would do if I were in that situation.

Now let's go back to that quote I just gave you.

“On the 4th day of life breastfed infants have roughly 47% bifidobacterium in their guts. Formula fed infants have roughly 15% bifidobacterium with the majority being enterococci.”

Breast milk and formula nourish the gut in completely different ways and therefore result in completely different gut flora. On the fourth day of life, beneficial bifidobacteria are flourishing in the breastfed infant – accounting for nearly half of the total microflora in place. On the other hand, enterococci are the dominant influence in the formula fed baby's gut.

EnteroWHAT?!?!?

I'd never heard of enterococci, so I looked them up! Turns out they are antibiotic resistant bacteria that can cause [urinary tract infections](#), [bacteremia](#), [bacterial endocarditis](#), [diverticulitis](#), and [meningitis](#). *And that's just one strain.*

As baby gets more curious - licking rocks, sucking on leaves and eating dirt, for example- the bacterial population will become more complex. *That's okay!* If beneficial bacteria were established early on the immune system is primed for these experiences.

Here's an analogy: When the upstanding citizens of our digestive tract (such as bifidobacteria) are governing, all is well. Toxins that try to sneak into our bodies are detained and escorted to the exit. The food we eat is broken down and distributed to fulfill vital functions in our bodies.

But what happens when the bifidobacteria are not in control? When they've been overrun by pathogenic microbes, parasites and fungi? Long story short, the pathogens start looting. They hijack baby's food and begin using it to feed their colonies. Now wildly out of control, these once benign colonies produce toxic byproducts that flood the body and cause illness, brain fog, learning disabilities, eczema, fibromyalgia, food allergies and other problems. And since they're getting the majority of baby's food (not baby), there's a very real risk of nutritional deficiencies.

Early on baby might develop bouts of diarrhea, thrush, colic, or eczema. . . .or they could have no discernible symptoms at all! However, as they get older the effects of poor gut flora become more obvious, because then the **food battles** begin.

Do You Know Children That Won't Eat Anything But Goldfish, Fries And Chicken Nuggets?

Or maybe pasta, bread and pizza? Are they finicky eaters or just plain spoiled? And here's the million dollar question: What on earth does gut bacteria have to do with food cravings?

It's simple, really. When a child's gut is populated with pathogenic bacteria they lose the ability to digest food properly. Instead of breaking down and traveling throughout the body to nourish cells, it rots in the gut through a process called alcoholic fermentation. *As in . . . beer.*

That's right, improperly digested sugars and carbs turn to alcohol in the body while improperly digested **grains convert to gluteomorphins** and **milk products convert to casomorphins**. If you're thinking that "morphin" seems very similar to "morphine," you're right. When properly broken down but a well-functioning digestive system these substances are beneficial, but in a digestive tract overrun by unhealthy gut flora they can act like opiates such as morphine and heroin.



Say, for example, that a child with an overgrowth of Candida (the fungus behind the dreaded thrush) eats a bag of corn chips. First, they'll feel a surge of "feel good" chemicals as the candida converts the carbs to alcohol. Then as soon as their little bodies have made the connection between this food and the "feel good" state, it will begin to demand it on a more regular basis, thus beginning a cycle where they crave the very foods that cause them harm.

Here's how Dr. Campbell-McBride describes this phenomenon in her book, [Gut & Psychology Syndrome](#):

"Yeast requires glucose and other sugars as food. Sugars come from the digestion of carbohydrates. In healthy people dietary glucose gets converted into lactic acid, water and energy through a biochemical process called glycolysis. In people with yeast overgrowth Candida hijacks the glucose and digests it in a different way, called alcoholic fermentation. In this biochemical process Candida and other yeasts convert dietary glucose into alcohol (ethanol) and its by-product acetaldehyde. This phenomenon was first described in adults, who appeared to be drunk without consuming any alcohol. Later on it was found that these adults had an overgrowth of yeast in their gut, which produced alcohol and made them permanently 'drunk.' These people were particularly 'drunk' after a carbohydrate meal, because carbohydrates are consumed by Candida with the production of alcohol."⁵

Not To Go All Deepak Chopra On You, But . . .

It wasn't supposed to be this way. Each of us is born with an inner wisdom when it comes to caring for our bodies . . . a gastronomic sage that speaks the language of cravings. As Dr. Campbell McBride puts it:

“if your body needs so much protein right now + so much fat + so much carbohydrate + so much of vitamin B12 and so much of vitamin C, how would it let you know that it needs this particular composition of nutrients? And even if your body had a way of letting you know all this information, how would you go about providing this mix of nutrients? How are you to calculate all those factors and provide the right amounts?”

Well, Mother Nature is kind and it is not asking us to do anything so complicated. Instead it gave us senses of SMELL, TASTE, [and] DESIRE for a particular food and a sense of SATISFACTION after eating it. So, when your body needs a particular mix of nutrients, it will give you a desire for a particular food, which contains just that right mix; this particular food will smell divine to you and taste wonderful, and you will feel satisfied after eating it.”

~ [One Man's Meat Is Another Man's Poison](#)

Our children's cravings become distorted when pathogenic bugs introduce addictive substances into their bloodstreams, but we can restore balance by replenishing their bodies with healthy bacteria. And that, dear readers, is why my first piece of advice when it comes to nourishing your little one is:



Let Them Eat BUGS!!

I'm talking about beneficial bacteria, of course! Although not technically a first food, probiotics lay the foundation for what your baby craves for the rest of his or her life. So, what if you had no idea about this when your baby was born? Can it be turned around? **Absolutely!** Probiotics specially formulated for infants are now available. My personal favorite is [Baby Biotic](#), but there are several good products available at most health food stores.

Another fabulous way to introduce beneficial bacteria is through fermented foods such as sour pickles. Yes, pickles! The benefits of probiotic rich foods is becoming so

widely recognized that even mainstream outlets like [Parenting Magazine](#) are recommending pickles with live cultures for babies over 6 months.

Need More Reasons To Bring This Age Old Practice Into Your Kitchen? Here Are A Few!

Introducing sour foods early is a great way to help your child develop a lifelong appreciation for all things fermenty, and that's a good thing! In addition to their probiotic benefits, fermented foods are more nutritious than their plain raw counterparts. Here's what Jenny at [Nourished Kitchen](#) has to say about that:

“Vegetables, fruits, legumes and grains subjected to lactic acid fermentation also see increases in both their macro- and micronutrient profiles. The bioavailability of amino acids, particularly lysine with its antiviral effects and methionine – increases with lactic acid fermentation. [2. Evaluation of lysine and methionine production in some Lactobacilli and yeasts. International Journal of Food Microbiology. Odunfa et al.]For grains, sprouting prior to souring can increase the availability of protein even further. Vegetables that have undergone lactic acid fermentation as in the case of sauerkraut and kimchi, often see an increase in the activity of vitamin C and vitamin A.”

[Fermented Food: Benefits of Lactic Acid Fermentation](#)

Too Busy Or Overwhelmed To Make Your Own Pickles?

Have no fear! Although most store-bought pickles, sauerkraut and other products are dead – meaning they don't contain live cultures – there is at least one brand out there that is truly fermented: [Bubbies](#)! They use fabulous ingredients, too, like fluoride-free artesian well water and mineral rich salt. They're really good, promise. I once ate half a jar of them before finishing my grocery shopping!

Okay, now, enough talk about bugs. Let's talk about breastfeeding!

Chapter 1 Key Points:

- Your child's food cravings and overall health are largely determined by the bacterial composition in their digestive tract.
- Give them the best start possible by intentionally introducing good bacteria into the birth canal.
- Help probiotic bacteria continue to flourish after birth by breastfeeding (if possible) and introducing probiotic-rich foods and supplements.