

Press Release

Danone drives scientific knowledge and awareness related to supporting gut microbiota balance in children born by cesarean section.

With C-section births rising in Thailand, Danone deepens efforts in its second C-Section Awareness Month initiative



From left: Associate Professor Captain Dr. Manopchai Thammakantho, Vice President of the Royal Thai College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and President of the Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness; Associate Professor Dr. Pongsak Noipayak, President of the Society for Child Development and Behavioral Pediatrics; Ms. Wirudchada Suttayakom, Healthcare and Nutrition Director, Danone Specialized Nutrition Thailand and Laos; and Ms. **Ye Vian Quah**, Marketing Director, Danone Specialized Nutrition Thailand & Laos, and Hi-Q Brand Director, Danone Southeast Asia

BANGKOK, 27 March 2026 –With caesarean (C-section) births now accounting for 40.9% of total births in Thailand, exceeding the World Health Organization’s recommended range of between 10 and 15%, Danone Thailand convened medical experts on its second C-Section Awareness Month to spotlight new evidence on the gut and immune challenges faced by C-section born children. The initiative also aimed to address concerns amongst mothers who



undergo C-section deliveries, many of whom cited worrying about their children having weaker immunity or developmental setbacks compared to vaginally born children.

C-section births, while sometimes medically necessary and lifesaving, can reduce a child's initial exposure to beneficial bacteria passed from mother to child during vaginal birth. This missing seeding can contribute to early gut imbalance, which research indicates may affect early brain development.

Breastmilk is a complete source of nutrition for infants, including those born by cesarean section, during the first six months of life. It contains synbiotic components that help support gut health, which forms an important foundation for strong immune development in the future. In addition, recent scientific research provides reassuring information for parents, finding that synbiotics, which are a combination of prebiotics and probiotics together with *Bifidobacterium breve*, can help restore the balance of gut microbiota in C-section-born infants. The research also shows that synbiotics not only act quickly and effectively in the body, but also provide sustained, long-lasting benefits.

Understanding the science

When babies are born vaginally, they naturally pick up helpful bacteria from their mothers. This is much like receiving a starter pack for building a strong gut & immune foundation. C-section children may miss parts of this natural transfer, which in turn delays the growth of good bacteria in the gut that supports a strong immunity.

The above-mentioned research shows that synbiotics can support a more balanced gut microbiota in these children with improvements observed.

Why this matters for today's generation of families

Global C-section births have surged from 7% in 1990 to 21% today, with rates expected to continue rising potentially to 29% by 2030 – a trend driven by factors such as advanced maternal age and increased use of IVF. As more mothers require C-section births, understanding how nutrition can help support gut and immune development is becoming increasingly critical.



Experts weigh in

At the recent healthcare symposium titled “**The Holistic Intelligence with Immunity for C-section Babies**”, organized by Danone as part of its C-Section Awareness Month initiative, medical experts discussed the health impact on children as a result of C-section births and how proven nutrition works in supporting gut and immune health.

Associate Professor Captain Dr. Manopchai Thammakantho, Vice President of the Royal Thai College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and President of the Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand under the Patronage of Her Royal Highness, addressed the rising rate of caesarean sections in Thailand. Citing 2022 data, he noted that the C-section rate reached 40.9% (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2022), an increase from approximately 35% reported in 2019. He explained that C-section delivery may lead to an imbalance of beneficial gut microbiota in infants during the first 1,000 days of life—a critical period that lays the foundation for development across all systems, particularly immunity and brain development. Drawing on global multi-country evidence, he emphasized that C-section births can have both short- and long-term health implications. In his lecture, he also presented approaches to mitigate these health effects in C-section born children, underscoring that breastmilk remains the optimal source of nutrition. One of its key bioactive components is synbiotics, which help restore the balance of healthy gut microbiota.

He further presented research on synbiotic supplementation in C-section born infants, demonstrating that supplementation supports more rapid immune development compared to infants who do not receive it, and reduces the risk of the five most common childhood illnesses. Recent published studies additionally confirm that synbiotic supplementation continues to support restoration of healthy gut microbiota. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of immune system development as a foundational determinant of children’s overall development, including brain development and learning.

Echoing this, **Associate Professor Dr. Pongsak Noipayak, President of the Society for Child Development and Behavioral Pediatrics**, added from a child-development perspective that immune-system development during the first 1,000 days of life also influences brain development. One key factor is having a balanced gut microbiota. Brain and nervous-system development is also important for children’s learning potential and can be strengthened through appropriate nutrition together with age-appropriate developmental stimulation. Appropriate



nutrition requires a balanced variety of nutrients working together – not just a single nutrient. These nutrients are found in breastmilk, such as DHA; Omega-3, -6, and -9; sphingomyelin; tryptophan; and vitamin B12.

Assoc. Prof. Pongsak continued that in an era where AI plays a greater role, children need a wide range of skills beyond IQ – such as analytical thinking, creativity, social skills, and adaptability. One key factor that works together with nutrition and inherited genetics is parenting, which should evolve to fit the changing times. Modern parents in the AI era should allow children to try things and explore on their own to support learning, analytical thinking, planning, and problem-solving, and to encourage them to think outside the box and create new ideas. Additionally, teaching children to understand and manage their emotions, as well as understand others, requires more attention. Parents should also teach and train children to be flexible and adaptable, not attached to familiar patterns, and to learn from failure and change their thinking or approach when situations change.

Assoc. Prof. Pongsak concluded by highlighting the role of healthcare professionals and parents in supporting children’s development so they can grow to their full potential and achieve future success in the way the children choose for themselves.

Danone deepens its commitment to the health of C-section born children

As a leader in health nutrition, Danone has continued this year to organize the “C-Section Awareness Month” initiative in Thailand for the second year, in collaboration with the Society for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, to promote comprehensive knowledge and understanding about the health care of C-section-born children.

This academic symposium brought together more than 300 healthcare professionals, including pediatricians and nurses, to exchange knowledge and approaches to supporting early-life health and development in young children.

“Danone supports scientific research and is committed to working with healthcare professionals and communities to provide knowledge in nutrition, in order to help deliver good health for children – including supporting healthy brain development and strong immunity – through multiple channels. **Ms. Wirudchada Suttayakom, Healthcare and Nutrition Director, Danone Thailand and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic**, stated.



“These include offering educational content and an immunity-tracking tool on our website to help raise awareness of the importance of nutrition, as well as operating a 24-hour parent hotline so that mothers do not have to face questions about child-rearing on their own.”

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About Danone

Danone is a leading global food and beverage company operating in three health-focused categories: Essential Dairy & Plant-Based products, Waters, and Specialized Nutrition. Our “One Planet One Health” vision drives us to inspire healthier and more sustainable eating and drinking practices. We believe our health is linked to a healthy planet and thriving communities. Our brands and supply chains are uniquely positioned to impact the health of consumers, communities, and the planet. The Danone Impact Journey, built on Health, Nature, and People & Communities, defines our sustainability priorities and transformation ambition across our value chain – from farmers and their communities, through our brands, to consumers and their families.

Danone is one of the first multinational companies to obtain global B Corp™ certification, reflecting our commitment to measurable nutritional, social, societal, and environmental impact.



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Danone in Thailand

Danone Specialized Nutrition Thailand has been a part of the Thai community for over 65 years, providing essential nutrients to Thai people for generations. Our brands, including Hi-Q and Dumex, have been

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trusted by Thai families for generations. Hi-Q is our iconic global brand, while Dumex has deep roots in Thailand, both backed by the latest scientific innovations in the field of specialized nutrition. Our commitment to Thailand includes significant investments in local talent and infrastructure, such as our Bangplee factory in Samut Prakarn province, which serves as a regional hub for Southeast Asia. Danone Thailand has been B Corp certified since 2021, reflecting our commitment to achieving measurable nutritional, social, societal, and environmental impact.

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