The Secret World Inside You
8.0 You Are An Ecosystem Interactive Table

Acquisition Text

**A1 – A Bacterial Bath**
*Category: Bacteria*
*Species: Lactobacillus*

During pregnancy, the community of bacteria in a mother’s birth canal changes. By the delivery date, several species of *Lactobacillus* have bloomed, and dominate the area.

Since *Lactobacillus* species can produce energy by breaking down lactose—the major sugar found in breast milk—the bacteria help newborns that ingest them in the birth canal to digest the milk they need to get growing.

**A2 – Mother’s Milk**
*Category: Bacteria*
*Species: Various Bifidobacterium*

Breast milk is filled with complex carbohydrates. But since babies can digest only 90% of those carbs, why are the other 10% even there?

They support bacteria in the baby’s intestines. *Bifida infantis* breaks down carbs that the baby can’t. When babies swallow milk, these bacteria multiply rapidly. They line an infant’s intestines, providing protection from infections. They also kick-start the baby’s digestive and immune systems. Clearly, the carbs are there to feed bacteria, not the baby!