

Microbiological Quality of Powdered Infant Formula in Latin America

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Abstract

Cronobacter is a bacterial genus that includes seven species, and the species *Cronobacter sakazakii* is most related to meningitis and septicemia in infants associated with powdered infant formula (PIF). The objectives of this study were to evaluate the presence of *C. sakazakii* and to determine the microbiological quality of PIF for infant consumption. To do this, a total of 128 PIF samples were analyzed in four brands and countries (Chile, Mexico, Holland, and Brazil), considering three types of PIF: premature (PIF1), infant (PIF2), and follow-up (PIF3). Aerobic plate counts (APC) and Enterobacteriaceae (ENT) were assessed in accordance with Chilean official standards. The outer membrane protein A (*ompA*) gene was amplified to detect *Cronobacter* spp. and the *fusA* gene was amplified to identify *C. sakazakii* by using the PubMLST Web site and BLAST (NCBI). The antibiotic resistance profile was performed according to the Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute standards. The pathogen was quantified by the most probable number (MPN). The results showed that APC median values for PIF1, PIF2, and PIF3 were 3.2, 4.9, and 4.8 log CFU g(-1), respectively. The APC were higher in PIF2 ($P < 0.01$) from Holland ($P < 0.01$) in the commercial brand 4 ($P < 0.01$). The ENT median values in PIF1, PIF2, and PIF3 were 1.8, 1.5, and 1.7 log CFU g(-1), respectively. Five strains of *C. sakazakii* and one strain of *Cronobacter malonaticus* were identified as having values between 0.023 and 2.3 MPN/g. All strains (100%) harbored the *ompA*, plasminogen activator (*cpa*), and hemolysin (*hly*) virulence genes. To conclude, *C. sakazakii* was found in four PIF samples from four Chilean products and one from Mexico, which is distributed throughout America. *C. sakazakii* strains exhibit virulence factors and resistance to ampicillin, thus posing a risk when PIFs are consumed by infants.

Palabras clave

Palabras clave de autor: [Antibiotic resistance](#); [Cronobacter sakazakii](#); [Microbiological quality](#); [Powdered infant formula](#); [Virulence](#)

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