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New Zealand runs trial to fix gut problems in autistic people

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A ground-breaking clinical trial involving microbiome transfer to alleviate gut problems in Autistic people is starting at the University of Auckland in New Zealand.

There are around 90,000 Autistic New Zealanders of whom almost half are experiencing long-standing and potentially distressing gut problems for reasons that remain unclear.

In the trial, around 50 Autistic people will receive the microbiome treatment and the same number will receive a placebo. The participants will have been screened to confirm they have stomach problems, such as diarrhoea and pain that impact on their day-to-day activities.

They will be followed for six months and assessed to see whether their symptoms ease. If the microbiome transfer is found to be helpful, it will be offered to the participants who received the placebo.

The research is informed by work that started 15 years ago, exploring the importance of the gut microbiome for a whole range of outcomes such as immunity, anxiety etc.

The microbiome bacteria will be encapsulated in several cases of digestible coating, so they will not be digested in the mouth or throat, but rather when they reach the gut.

The capsules will be administered over two days at the University, with medical supervision, out of an abundance of care.