Abstract

Background/aims: functional constipation is a prevalent problem within the western population. There is evidence supporting the fact that the inclusion of pre and probiotics in the diet can favorably modify the intestinal function. The present study evaluates the effect of the consumption of Activia®, a yogurt containing 108 UFC/g of Bifidobacterium animalis (DN-173 010) and fructooligosaccharide, in women between the ages of 18 and 55 with and without functional constipation (Rome II criteria). Methods: after a stabilization and a basal period, women were randomized to receive 2 units/day of Activia or a lacteous dessert without probiotics (control) for a period of 14 days. Afterwards the groups were intercrossed for another 14 days. Results: of the 399 women who started the study, 378 were eligible for study participation. In the group of women with functional constipation (n= 266), the consumption of the symbiotic was associated with a higher bowel evacuation rate (6.1±2.7 depositions/week with Activia vs. 5.0±2.6 dep./week in the control group; P<0.01), an improvement in the quality of the stools according to the Bristol scale (3.6±1.0 vs. 3.4±1.0; P<0.01), a reduced perception of straining effort (1.9±0.8 vs. 2.2±0.9; P<0.01) and a reduced perception of pain associated with defecation (0.1±0.2 vs. 0.2±0.3; P<0.01). In the group of women without constipation (n=112) there were statistically significant variations in equal sense but of smaller magnitude, with the exception of pain which, having a very low value in the basal period, did not experience changes. Conclusion: the consumption of a symbiotic yogurt by women with functional constipation showed a significant improvement in the parameters related with bowel evacuation. The use of this symbiotic food can result in a useful and safe tool for managing constipation.

Keywords

Constipation, Probiotics, Prebiotics, Intestines, Colon.