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*Pregnancy and diet-related changes in the maternal gut microbiota following exposure to an elevated linoleic acid diet*

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2 **Pregnancy and diet-related changes in the maternal gut microbiota**  
3 **following exposure to an elevated linoleic acid diet**  
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33 Running head: Linoleic acid alters gut microbiome in pregnancy  
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41 **ABSTRACT**

42 Dietary intakes of linoleic acid (LA) have increased, including in women of reproductive age.  
43 Changes in maternal gut microbiome have been implicated in the metabolic adaptations that  
44 occur during pregnancy. We aimed to investigate if consumption of a diet with elevated LA  
45 altered fecal microbiome diversity prior to and during pregnancy. Female Wistar Kyoto rats  
46 consumed a high LA diet (HLA: 6.21% of energy) or a low LA diet (LLA: 1.44% of energy)  
47 for 10 weeks prior to mating and during pregnancy. DNA was isolated from fecal samples prior  
48 to pregnancy (embryonic day 0 (E0)), or during pregnancy at E10 and E20. The microbiome  
49 composition was assessed with 16S rRNA sequencing. At E0, the beta diversity of LLA and  
50 HLA groups differed with HLA rats having significantly lower abundance of the genera  
51 *Akkermansia*, *Peptococcus*, *Sutterella* and *Xo2d06* but higher abundance of *Butyricimonas* and  
52 *Coprococcus*. Over gestation, in LLA but not HLA rats, there was a reduction in alpha diversity  
53 and an increase in beta diversity. In the LLA group, the abundance of *Akkermansia*, *Blautia*,  
54 *rc4.4* and *Streptococcus* decreased over gestation, whereas *Coprococcus* increased. In the HLA  
55 group, only the abundance of *Butyricimonas* decreased. At E20, there were no differences in  
56 alpha and beta diversity, and the abundance of *Roseburia* was significantly increased in the  
57 HLA group. In conclusion, consumption of a HLA diet alters gut microbiota composition, as  
58 does pregnancy in rats consuming a LLA diet. In pregnancy, consumption of a HLA diet does  
59 not alter gut microbiota composition.

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## 62 **INTRODUCTION**

63 The omega 6 (n-6) polyunsaturated fatty acid (PUFA), linoleic acid (LA; 18:2n-6; cis, cis-9,  
64 12-octadecadienoic acid), is an essential fatty acid that can only be obtained in the diet. In  
65 Western societies, LA consumption has increased to three times the recommended daily  
66 intake (28). In Australia, LA availability in the diet has increased by 120% (28) and in the  
67 USA by 158% (5) over the past decades, primarily due to the increased use of plant-based  
68 oils such as corn, safflower, sunflower and soybean in the food supply (35). The high intake  
69 of n-6 FA in the Western diet is reflected in the fatty acid profile of pregnant and lactating  
70 women (2). Optimal maternal health during pregnancy is critical for fetal development, and  
71 maternal stressors can perturb fetal development leading to an increased risk of disease in  
72 later life (13). LA can be metabolised into downstream lipid mediators, including pro-  
73 inflammatory eicosanoids and prostaglandins (33). We have recently demonstrated, in a  
74 rodent model of low versus high LA intake during pregnancy, that elevated maternal LA  
75 increases pro-inflammatory prostaglandin concentrations, and alters the circulating lipid  
76 profile of the mother during pregnancy (36). Dietary intake is an important determinant of  
77 gut microbiota composition (7), suggesting that an elevated maternal LA diet may alter  
78 microbiota diversity. Furthermore, gut microbiota diversity is strongly associated a range of  
79 host functions that impact health, including inflammation and lipid levels (23).

80 The specific species composition of the gut microbiota can be a disease risk factor, as the  
81 microbiota can regulate energy homeostasis and whole body metabolism (14).  
82 Mechanistically, this is via the digestion of polysaccharides to produce essential nutrients (6),  
83 so that bacterial diversity is important for the metabolism of a diversity of nutrients. LA is  
84 biohydrogenated by microbes into the saturated fatty acid stearic acid (19), with a number of

85 intermediates, or bioactive metabolites (10). Previous research has demonstrated that diet can  
86 influence gut microbial diversity (44) and emerging research has demonstrated that  
87 pregnancy can impact the diversity of gut microbiota (15). In pregnancy, hormonal alterations  
88 modulate the maternal metabolic environment to ensure appropriate fetal nutrition. This  
89 places the mother in a state of metabolic dysfunction that becomes more overt as the  
90 pregnancy advances. This state of metabolic dysfunction can be further impacted by diet and  
91 contributed to pregnancy disorders that occur when physiological metabolic dysfunction  
92 becomes pathological. Current hypotheses suggest that changes to the gut microbiota, under  
93 the influence of pregnancy specific hormones, may contribute to the pregnancy associated  
94 metabolic changes (16). Further, alterations in the maternal gut microbiota during pregnancy  
95 can alter the microbiome and immune system of offspring later in life (29).

96 At this time, we do not know if elevated maternal LA consumption alters the fecal  
97 microbiome. Therefore, the current study aimed to investigate the effects of elevated maternal  
98 LA consumption on the composition of the gut microbiota prior to and during pregnancy in  
99 a rodent model. We hypothesised that exposure to elevated maternal concentrations of LA  
100 would alter gut microbiota composition, and pregnancy would reduce microbiota diversity  
101 independent of maternal LA intake.

102

## 103 MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 104 *Ethical approval, experimental animal model and diet*

105 Wistar Kyoto rats (8 weeks of age, n=6) were purchased from the Australian Resource Centre  
106 (ARC, WA, Australia) and housed in accordance to the Australian Code of Practice for Care  
107 and Use of Animals for Scientific Purpose after ethical approval being granted by the Griffith  
108 University Animal Ethics Committee (NSC/01/17/AEC).

109 Rats were housed in individually ventilated cages under 12 hours light-dark cycle at a  
110 temperature of 20-22°C and provided with standard food pellets during acclimatisation and  
111 tap water *ad libitum* throughout the study. After a week for acclimatization, female rats were  
112 randomised to either a control low linoleic acid (LLA: 1.44%) diet or a high linoleic acid  
113 (HLA: 6.21%) diet for 10 weeks. These diets were matched for carbohydrate, protein, fibre,  
114 n-3 PUFA and total fat content (36). The diets were matched for total fat intake by increasing  
115 the content of MUFA in the LLA diet (36). After 8 weeks of dietary exposure, vaginal  
116 impedance was measured daily for at least two estrous cycles using a rodent vaginal  
117 impedance reader (Muromachi Kikai Co. Ltd., Japan). Rats were considered ready for mating  
118 after 10 weeks of dietary exposure and when vaginal impedance was greater than  $4.5 \times 10^3$   
119  $\Omega$  and at this time were placed with a Wistar Kyoto male rat overnight. The day after mating  
120 was considered embryonic day 1 (E1). The rats were fed the LLA or HLA diet during  
121 gestation as well. The female rat was weighed daily and monitored for weight gain during  
122 pregnancy.

### 123 *Fecal sample collection for microbiota analysis*

124 To examine the effect of LLA vs. HLA diet on both the non-pregnant and pregnant female  
125 microbiota, fecal samples were collected from female rats at three time points; following 10

126 weeks of nutritional intervention (non-pregnant; identified as E0), and at E10 and E20. During  
127 the time of fecal sample collection, rats were housed individually. The fecal sample was  
128 collected in the morning (10:00-11:00 am).

### 129 *Extraction of DNA*

130 At the time of collection, fecal samples were weighed, and immediately frozen at  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ .  
131 DNA was extracted from the thawed fecal sample using a QIAamp DNA Stool Mini Kit  
132 (Qiagen). Briefly,  $\sim 250\text{mg}$  of frozen stool was lysed and the DNA extracted using the  
133 manufacturer's instructions. The eluted DNA was suspended in  $200\mu\text{L}$  of buffer (Buffer ATE  
134 provided by company) and stored  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

### 135 *Processing and analysis of 16S rRNA gene sequencing data*

136 16S sequencing of the V1-V3 region of the 16S rRNA gene was performed by the Australian  
137 Genome Research Facility (AGRF), using the forward primer:  
138 AGAGTTTGATCMTGGCTCAG and reverse primer: GWATTACCGCGGCKGCTG to  
139 amplify the 27F-519R target. The read length for paired end sequences was  $2 \times 300$  bp. The  
140 sequences with 100% overlap were selected for downstream analysis. Paired-ends reads were  
141 assembled by aligning the forward and reverse reads using PEAR1 (version 0.9.5). Primers  
142 were identified and trimmed. Trimmed sequences were processed using Quantitative Insights  
143 into Microbial Ecology (QIIME 1.8) USEARCH (version 8.0.1623) and UPARSE software.  
144 Using usearch tools sequences were quality filtered, full length duplicate sequences were  
145 removed and sorted by abundance. Singletons or unique reads in the data set were discarded.  
146 Sequences were clustered followed by chimera filtered using "rdp\_gold" database as  
147 reference. To obtain number of reads in each OTU, reads were mapped back to OTUs with a  
148 minimum identity of 97%. Using QIIME taxonomy was assigned using Greengenes database  
149 (Version 13\_8, Aug 2013).

150 *Statistical analysis*

151 The sequencing data did not adhere to the normal distribution and data analysis was  
152 performed using non-parametric statistics with  $p < 0.05$  as cut-off for statistical significance.  
153 Data was not corrected for multiple testing due to the small sample size. Data are presented  
154 as median and interquartile range (IQR). Gut microbiota composition at the genus level was  
155 compared using the Calypso software tool (43). Alpha diversity was assessed with the Chao1  
156 and Shannon indices and beta diversity with unsupervised (PCoA) based on the Bray-Curtis  
157 dissimilarity statistic, PERMANOVA (Adonis) and supervised (RDA) analysis. Group  
158 comparisons were conducted with the Wilcoxon Rank test and LEfSe (linear discriminant  
159 analysis (LDA) effect size) analysis. LEfSe analysis identifies bacterial genera that  
160 predominantly explain the differences between the diet groups and the different gestations.  
161 We identified discriminating features that were ranked on their effects size based on a log10  
162 scale.

163 **RESULTS**

164 *Effect of a high maternal linoleic acid diet on maternal weight*

165 Maternal consumption of HLA for 10 weeks prior to pregnancy and through gestation did not  
166 affect body weight either prior to pregnancy or during gestation (Figure 1) compared to LLA  
167 controls, similar to our previous study (36).

168 *Gut microbiota composition in response to a HLA diet.*

169 All results are presented at genus level. Before pregnancy (E0), there was no difference in  
170 alpha diversity between dams on LLA or HLA diets with either the Chao1 (Figure 2A) and  
171 the Shannon index (Figure 2B). There was a significant difference in beta diversity in both  
172 unsupervised PCoA (Figure 2C,  $p < 0.05$ ) and supervised RDA analysis (Figure 2D,  $p < 0.05$ ),



173 with the diet explaining 21% of the variation between the groups. PERMANOVA analysis  
174 showed that these variations were significant ( $P=0.006$ ). In the group comparisons, HLA diet  
175 decreased the abundance of *Akkermansia*, *Peptococcus*, *Sutterella* and *O2d06* and increased  
176 the abundance of *Butyricimonas*, *Coprococcus*, *Uncl. Clostridiales*, *Uncl. Victivallaceae* and  
177 *Uncl. YS2* (Figure 2E). The difference in the abundance of *Butyricimonas* and *Uncl.*  
178 *Victivallaceae* was significant after correcting for multiple testing ( $FDR=0.048$  for both) but  
179 none of the other differences remained. This was confirmed by the LEfSe analysis, which  
180 showed that these bacterial genera were the main determinants of differences in the gut  
181 microbiota between the diets (Figure 2F).

#### 182 ***Gut microbiota composition over gestation with maternal LLA diet***

183 Alpha diversity decreased sharply at E20 as measured by the Chao1 (Figure 3A,  $p < 0.05$ )  
184 and the Shannon index (Figure 3B,  $p < 0.05$ ). There was a significant difference in beta  
185 diversity in both unsupervised PCoA (Figure 3C,  $p < 0.05$ ), supervised RDA analysis (Figure  
186 3D,  $p < 0.05$ ) and with PERMANOVA analysis ( $P=0.03$ ). Gestational age explained 15% of  
187 the variation in beta diversity. In the group comparisons, the abundance of *Akkermansia*,  
188 *Blautia*, *rc4.4*, *Streptococcus*, *Uncl. Bacteroidales*, *Uncl. Christensenellaceae*, *Uncl.*  
189 *Mogibacteriaceae* and *Uncl. Ruminococcaceae* decreased over gestation and only the  
190 abundance of *Coprococcus* increased over gestation (Figure 3E). In the LEfSe analysis,  
191 *Streptococcus*, *Akkermansia*, *Uncl. Ruminococcaceae* and *Uncl. Bacteroidales* were  
192 associated with the gut microbiota at E0, *Peptococcus* with E10 and *Coprococcus*,  
193 *Ruminococcus* and *Bacteroides* with E20 (Figure 3F).

#### 194 ***Gut microbiota composition over gestation with maternal HLA diet***

195 Alpha diversity did not change in dams on the HLA diet as measured by the Chao1 (Figure  
196 4A) and the Shannon index (Figure 4B). There was a trend toward significant difference in

197 beta diversity in the unsupervised PCoA (Figure 4C,  $p=0.08$ ), supervised RDA analysis  
198 (Figure 4D,  $p=0.07$ ) and PERMANOVA analysis ( $P=0.08$ ). Gestational age explained only  
199 9% of the variation in beta diversity. In the group comparisons, the abundance of  
200 *Butyricimonas* and *Uncl. Lachnospiraceae* decreased over gestation, the abundance of *Uncl.*  
201 *Victivallaceae* decreased significantly at E10 and the abundance of *Uncl. RF39* increased  
202 over gestation (Figure 4E). In animals on the HLA diet, *Butyricimonas*, *Uncl.*  
203 *Lachnospiraceae*, *Uncl. Ruminococcaceae* and *Uncl. Mogibacteriaceae* were determinants  
204 of the gut microbiota at E0, *Sutterella* at E10 and *Uncl. RF39* at E20 in the LEfSe analysis  
205 (Figure 4F).

#### 206 ***Differences in gut microbiota composition between the maternal diets at E10 and E20***

207 At E10, there was a decrease in alpha diversity as measured by the Shannon index in the HLA  
208 diet group (Figure 5A,  $P=0.017$ ) but not in the Chao1 index (Figure 5B). There still was  
209 clustering of the samples from LLA and the HLA group with both PCoA (Figure 5C) and  
210 RDA analysis (Figure 5D) though PERMANOVA analysis showed that this was just  
211 borderline significant ( $P=0.06$ ). When comparing the gut microbiota composition between  
212 the groups, there was significantly lower abundance of *Akkermansia* in the HLA diet group  
213 but higher abundance of *Bilophila*, *Roseburia*, *Uncl. Barnesiellaceae* and *Uncl. YS2* (Figure  
214 5E). This was confirmed by LEfSe analysis that also identified higher abundance of  
215 *Desulfovibrio*, *Bacteroides* and *Uncl. Victivallaceae* in the HLA group contributing to the  
216 differences between the groups (Figure 5F). At E20, there was no difference in alpha diversity  
217 with either the Chao1 or the Shannon index (Data not shown). There were no differences in  
218 beta diversity in the PCoA analysis (Data not shown), the RDA analysis (Data not shown)  
219 and PERMANOVA analysis ( $P=0.48$ , data not shown). Only the abundance of *Roseburia* was

220 significantly increased in the dams on the HLA diet in the group comparison (Data not shown)  
221 but no differences were observed in the LEfSe analysis (data not shown).

222

223

## 224 **DISCUSSION**

225 The level of dietary LA strongly influenced female rat gut microbiota composition. Further,  
226 a high LA diet was associated with a suppression of the relative reduction in bacterial species  
227 diversity observed in pregnant rats on a low LA diet. Our results demonstrate that HLA intake  
228 before conception alters the composition of the gut microbiota in female rats, significantly  
229 resulting in lower diversity of the gut microbiota in addition to changes in the abundances of  
230 specific bacterial genera as compared with a LLA intake. Pregnancy reduces gut microbiota  
231 diversity and alters gut microbiota composition only in dams on a low LA diet. Conversely,  
232 in dams consuming a HLA diet prior to and during gestation, there are no changes to gut  
233 microbiota diversity and only limited changes to gut microbiota composition, with distinct  
234 genera changing abundance over gestation in each diet group. In late pregnancy, there are no  
235 differences between dams on LLA or HLA diet with respect to gut microbiota diversity and  
236 only one genus that was differentially abundant. A recent study demonstrated that microbiota  
237 community taxonomic composition and diversity remain stable during pregnancy (9).

238 High intake of LA had large effects on the diversity and composition of the gut microbiota  
239 prior to conception, and these changes may have functional consequences. For example, some  
240 of the genera that increased in abundance with the HLA diet are known short chain fatty acid  
241 producers including *Akkermansia*, *Butyricimonas*, *Coprococcus* and members of the  
242 *Clostridiales* order. Abundance of *Akkermansia* and especially the species *Akkermansia*

243 *muciniphila* abundance has previously been linked to dietary fat intake, although this  
244 relationship is complex, with both increased and decreased abundance has been reported  
245 depending on the type of lipid, the overall composition of the diet or the presence of additional  
246 treatments (22, 24, 31, 34). In general however, *Akkermansia* abundance is negatively  
247 correlated with dietary fat intake (30). Here we observed a decrease in *Akkermansia*  
248 abundance both in response to HLA diet and over gestation in the LLA group. *Akkermansia*  
249 is a mucus degrader that synthesises short chain fatty acids that are generally considered  
250 beneficial for the host (e.g. increasing gut barrier function and stimulating beneficial mucosal  
251 microbial networks), and a modulator of the immune system (30). Depletion of this genus  
252 may therefore have detrimental effects on the host through the reduction in short chain fatty  
253 acids.

254 In response to the HLA diet, we not only observed decreased abundance of *Akkermansia* but  
255 also of *Sutterella*, and increased abundance of *Butyricimonas* and *Coprococcus*. Alterations  
256 in the abundances of these bacteria in response to increased dietary lipid intake have been  
257 reported previously (3, 26, 32), indicating that all of these genera may be sensitive to the fatty  
258 acid content of the diet. Human pregnancy has previously been reported to reduce the  
259 individual (alpha) diversity of the gut microbiota in humans (21) and rodents (15). Here we  
260 observed a similar decrease in gut microbiota alpha diversity, but only in rats on the LLA  
261 diet, suggesting that a HLA diet may perturbed normal changes in microbial composition. In  
262 a study of Sprague-Dawley rats on high fat and control diet during gestation and lactation,  
263 changes to beta diversity were reported only in animals on a high fat diet, not on a control  
264 diet (25). This is in contrast to our results, where we only observed altered beta diversity in  
265 the animals on the LLA diet. This may be due to differences in the rat strain, dietary  
266 composition and the small number of pregnant rats (four) on the control diet. The contrasting  
267 results could also be due to the differences between pre-pregnancy exposure to the diet, which

268 was present in our study but not in the high fat diet study given that it was stated that the  
269 dietary effect increased over time and overcame the pregnancy effect at later time points (25).  
270 In addition, overall weight and weight gain were not different between the two diet groups at  
271 any time point in this study, whereas weight was altered in the high fat diet study, suggesting  
272 that the changes in microbiota diversity in the high fat diet study may be related to weight  
273 gain/perturbed metabolism. Indeed, host-microbial interactions can impact the host's  
274 metabolism (21). In contrast, the changes in gut microbiota that we observed appear to be  
275 directly linked to LA dietary composition, rather than a secondary effect of a shift in  
276 metabolism.

277 We observed in this study, that in LLA rats, there was higher microbiome diversity compared  
278 to those consuming the HLA diet. This may be due to the reduced concentration of LA in the  
279 diet, but may also be due to the elevated concentration of MUFA in the LLA diet. The increase  
280 in diversity observed with an increased MUFA diet contradicts the findings from a recent  
281 systematic review (41). Wolters *et al.* determined that a high intake of MUFA in non-  
282 pregnant humans was thought to decrease bacterial numbers, with no effect on diversity (41).  
283 While the effect of an increase in MUFA independently was not assessed in our study, it  
284 should be noted that, at this time, there is a paucity of data concerning the effect of an elevated  
285 MUFA diet in pregnancy on microbiome diversity and abundance.

286 Transplantation of human third trimester gut microbiota samples into germ-free mice  
287 rendered them insulin resistant and fat, demonstrating the important link between gut  
288 microbiota and metabolic syndrome (21). One bacterium that has been associated with altered  
289 metabolism in pregnancy is *Blautia*. In early pregnancy, lower abundance of *Blautia* was  
290 reported in women with higher integrity of the gut wall barrier (27). Furthermore, women  
291 with excessive weight gain in pregnancy have higher abundance of *Blautia* (37) and in women

292 with gestational diabetes mellitus, an inverse correlation between the change in insulin levels  
293 over gestation and *Blautia* abundance was reported (12). Here we have observed a decrease  
294 in the abundance of *Blautia* over gestation but only in the LLA diet group. This may indicate  
295 that the abundance of *Blautia* was higher in the LLA group at the start of pregnancy, though  
296 not significantly so, similar to what has been reported previously in young healthy humans  
297 on a low fat diet (39). *Blautia* can produce short chain fatty acids and decreases in its  
298 abundance have been associated with insulin resistance (18, 40). Therefore, decreased  
299 abundance of *Blautia* over pregnancy may be associated with the pregnancy-induced increase  
300 in insulin resistance, indicating that a diet high in LA could perturb metabolism.

301

302 Members of the *Clostridium* cluster and *Roseburia* are known to metabolise linoleic acid  
303 through conjugation (8), which is not greatly absorbed (20) but may have local beneficial  
304 effects on the gut epithelium (17). *Roseburia* is also a short chain fatty acid producer and  
305 immune modulator (11), and is increased in women consuming a vegetarian diet in early  
306 pregnancy (4). The vegetarian diet in the study (4) was higher in LA content; therefore, HLA  
307 diet may specifically increase *Roseburia* abundance over the course of pregnancy, similar to  
308 what we observe in rats fed a HLA diet. *Roseburia* abundance increased in pregnancy in  
309 BALB/c (11), suggesting that there may be an interaction between dietary intake and  
310 pregnancy.

311 Emerging studies in animal models have shown the strong correlation between liver disease  
312 and dysbiosis (1). The gut and liver communicate through biliary tract, portal vein and  
313 circulation (38). We recently reported alteration in inflammatory cytokines in liver from the  
314 rats fed with HLA at E20 (36). This change in hepatic inflammatory cytokines may be  
315 associated with change in abundance of microorganisms. For example, in mouse model of

316 immune mediated liver injury, *Akkermansia muciniphila* had protective role by alleviating  
317 inflammation (42). Therefore, the decrease in abundance of *Akkermansia* in rats fed with  
318 HLA diet may be associated with liver inflammation previously observed in these rats (36).

319 In summary, our data demonstrate that HLA intake lowers the diversity and alters the  
320 composition of the gut microbiota in rats. Pregnancy similarly reduces the diversity and alters  
321 the composition of the gut microbiota but only in rats that were consuming a LLA diet. For  
322 the rats that consumed a HLA diet prior to conception, there were only small changes to the  
323 composition of the gut microbiota in pregnancy. These results suggest that HLA intake prior  
324 to conception mimics the changes to the gut microbiota normally observed by the end of  
325 pregnancy. These changes, may affect the risk of development of pregnancy complications  
326 in women consuming a pre-pregnancy diet that is high in LA.

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336 **DISCLOSURES**

337 No conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, are declared by the authors.

338 **AUTHOR NOTES**

339 \*M. Dekker Nitert and D. Hryciw contributed equally to this work.

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489 **Figure legends**

490

491 Figure 1. Effect of HLA diet on maternal body weight. There was no difference between the  
492 LLA and HLA groups at different ages. Data expressed as mean  $\pm$  SEM. n=6 (LLA) and n=6  
493 (HLA) at E0, E10 and E20.

494

495 Figure 2: Gut microbiota composition at E0 in the LLA and HLA groups. A-B) There was no  
496 difference in alpha diversity between dams on LLA or HLA diets. C-D) There was a significant  
497 difference in beta diversity in both unsupervised PCoA and supervised RDA analysis, with the  
498 diet explaining 21% of the variation between groups. E) HLA diet decreased the abundance of  
499 *Akkermansia*, *Peptococcus*, *Sutterella* and *O2d06* and increased the abundance of  
500 *Butyricimonas*, *Coprococcus*, *Uncl. Clostridiales*, *Uncl. Victivallaceae* and *Uncl. YS2*. F)  
501 Representation of bacterial genera driving the differences between LLA and HLA diets at E0  
502 as shown by the LEfSe analysis. n=6 (LLA) and n=6 (HLA). \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01.

503

504 Figure 3: Gut microbiota composition over gestation in the LLA group. A-B) Alpha diversity  
505 decreased sharply at E20 as measured by the Chao1 and the Shannon index. C-D) There was a  
506 significant difference in beta diversity in both unsupervised PCoA and supervised RDA  
507 analysis. E) The abundance of *Akkermansia*, *Blautia*, *rc4.4*, *Streptococcus*, *Uncl.*  
508 *Bacteroidales*, *Uncl. Christensenellaceae*, *Uncl. Mogibacteriaceae* and *Uncl.*  
509 *Ruminococcaceae* decreased over gestation and only the abundance of *Coprococcus* increased  
510 over gestation in LLA group. F) Representation of the bacterial genera driving the differences  
511 between the gestations in animals on the LLA diet. n=6 (LLA) and n=6 (HLA) at E0, E10 and  
512 E20. \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01.

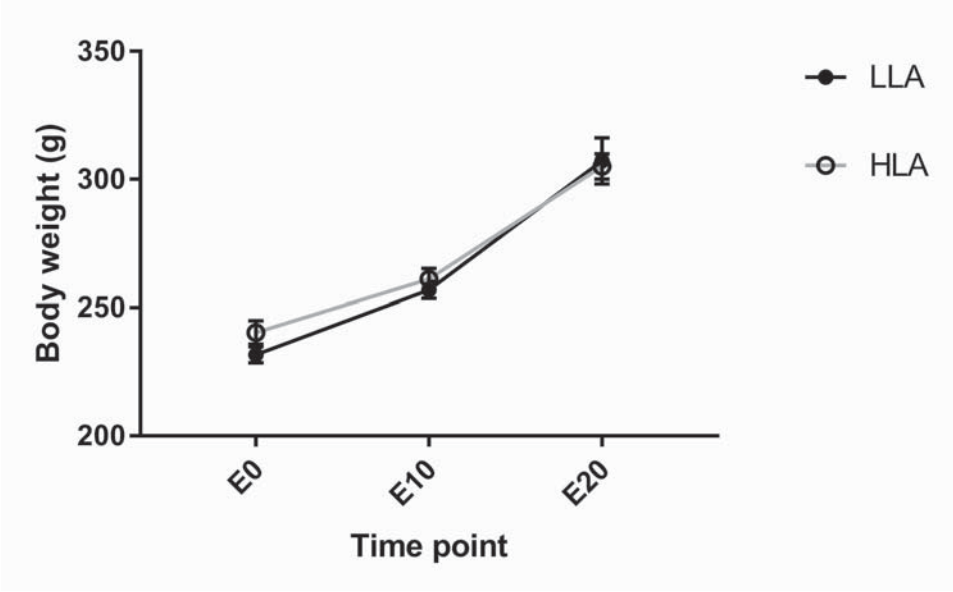
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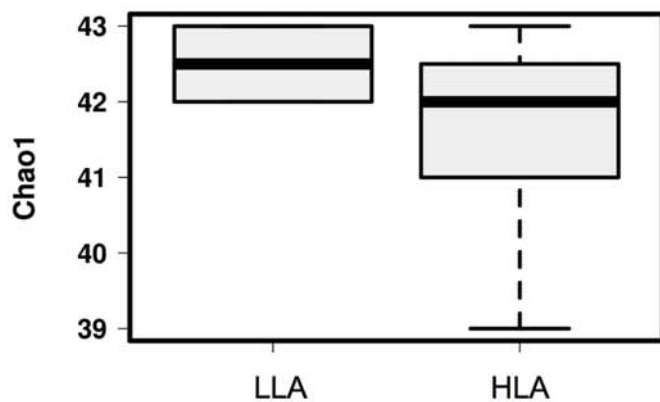
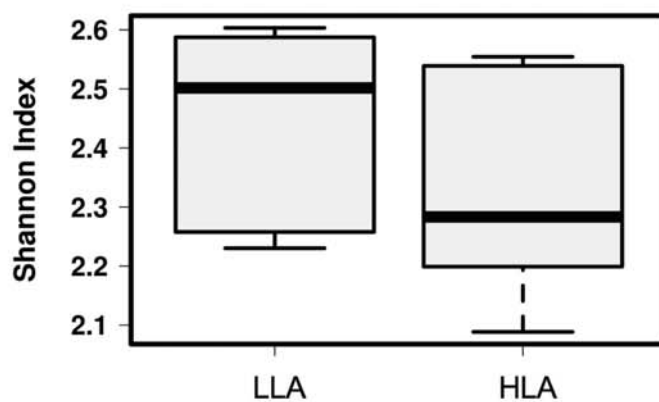
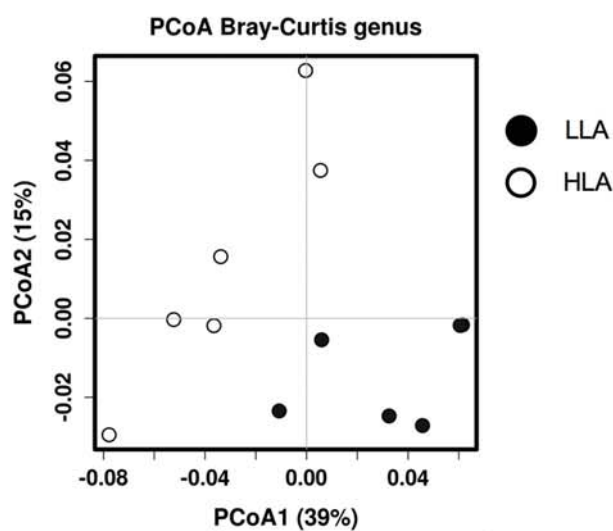
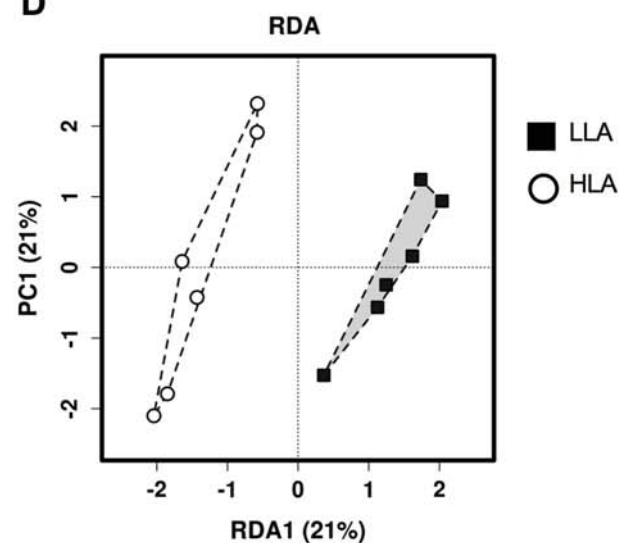
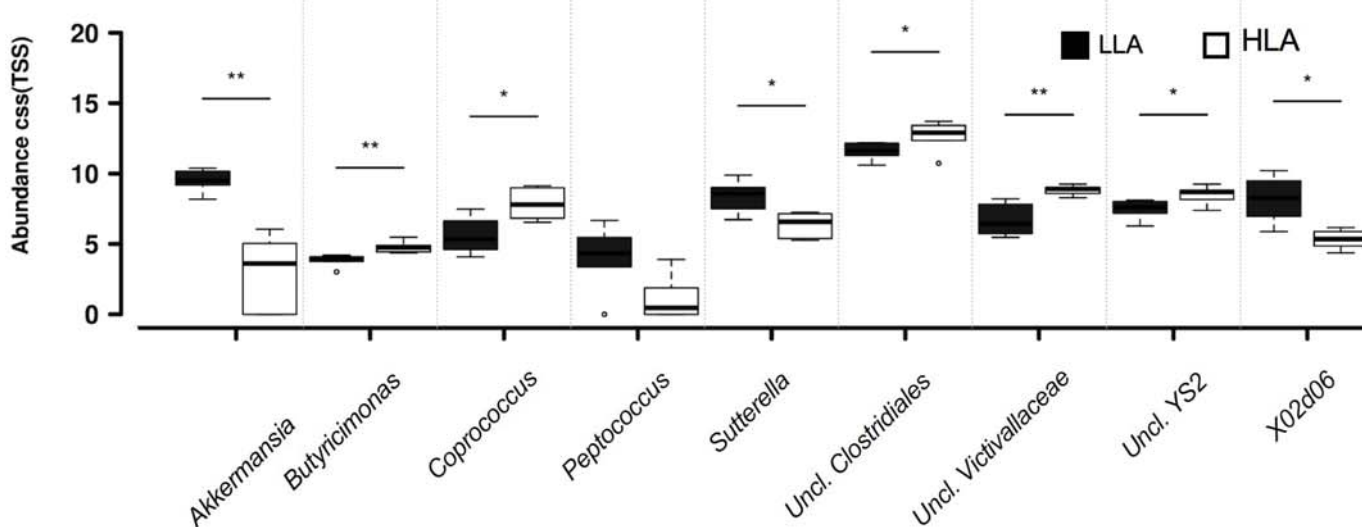
514 Figure 4: Gut microbiota composition over gestation in the HLA group. A-B) Alpha diversity  
515 did not change in dams on the HLA diet as measured by the Chao1 and the Shannon index. C-

516 D) There was a trend toward significant difference in beta diversity in the unsupervised PCoA  
517 (p=0.08) and supervised RDA analysis (p=0.07). E) In the group comparisons, the abundance  
518 of *Butyricimonas* and *Uncl. Lachnospiraceae* decreased over gestation, the abundance of *Uncl.*  
519 *Victivallaceae* decreased significantly at E10 and the abundance of *Uncl. RF39* increased over  
520 gestation. F) Representation of the bacterial genera driving the differences between the  
521 gestations in animals on the HLA diet. n=6 (LLA) and n=6 (HLA) at E0, E10 and E20.  
522 \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01.

523  
524 Figure 5: Gut microbiota composition at E10 in the LLA and HLA groups. A-B) there was a  
525 decrease in alpha diversity as measured by the Shannon index in the HLA diet group but not  
526 in the Chao1 index. C-D) There was clustering of the samples from LLA and the HLA group  
527 with both PCoA and RDA analysis. E) There was significantly lower abundance of  
528 *Akkermansia* in the HLA diet group but higher abundance of *Bilophila*, *Roseburia*, *Uncl.*  
529 *Barnesiellaceae* and *Uncl. YS2* F) Representation of the bacterial genera driving the differences  
530 between LLA and HLA diets at E10. n=6 (LLA) and n=6 (HLA). \*p<0.05.

531  
532



**A****B****C****D****E****F**