

Abstract

Timing of Introduction to Complementary Foods in Māori, Pasifika, and Other Infants in Aotearoa New Zealand [†]

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Abstract: Transitioning from milk to complementary food (CF) is a critical time for infants, with the non-timely introduction associated with poorer health outcomes. We aimed to describe the timing of the introduction of CF and its sociodemographic associations in an ethnically diverse cohort of urban-dwelling infants. The timing of CF introduction and sociodemographic characteristics (ethnicity, maternal education, parity, deprivation index, infant sex) were collected by questionnaire when infants were 7.0–10.0 months. Early CF introduction was defined as ≤ 4 months and late as ≥ 7 months of age. Of 625 infants, 131 (20.1%) were identified as Māori, 82 (13.2%) as Pasifika, and 450 (72.1%) as other. The mean (SD) age of CF introduction was 4.9 (1.1) months for both Māori and Pasifika infants and 5.3 (0.8) months for other. 6.9% of Māori infants were introduced to CF before 4 months, 33.6% at 4 months, and 3.1% at 7 months. For Pasifika, the percentages were 9.8%, 24.4%, and 3.7%, respectively. For others, percentages were lower at <1%, 16.7%, and 1.8%, respectively. Using logistic regression analysis, Māori and Pasifika had higher odds of early CF introduction for infants with mothers whose highest education was secondary school (Māori: 3.8 ([95% CI] 1.5, 9.8); Pasifika: 3.3 (1.1, 10.3)). The odds of early CF introduction for other infants were higher for those with mothers whose highest education was secondary school (2.1 (1.2, 3.5)), who lived in areas of high deprivation (1.8 (1.0, 3.2)), and whose infant sex was male (1.7 (1.1, 2.9)). Parity was not associated with early CF introduction for any group. Most infants in all groups were introduced to CF between 4 and 6 months of age and over half at around 6 months of age. A small proportion of infants were introduced before 4 months. This research identifies groups that would benefit from more targeted infant feeding support.

Keywords: infant; Māori; Pasifika; complementary feeding; ethnicity



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