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

Maria Casale 1, Kathryn Beck 1, Cathryn Conlon 1, Lisa Te Morenga 2, Jillian Haszard 3, Anne-Louise Heath 4, Rachael Taylor 5,‡ and Pamela von Hurst 1,*

1 School of Sport Exercise and Nutrition, Massey University, Auckland 0745, New Zealand
2 Research Centre for Hauora and Health, Massey University, Wellington 6140, New Zealand
3 Biostatistics Centre, University of Otago, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand
4 Department of Human Nutrition, University of Otago, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand
5 Department of Medicine, University of Otago, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand
* Correspondence: p.r.vonhurst@massey.ac.nz; Tel.: +64-9-213-6657
† Presented at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Nutrition Society of New Zealand 2022, Wellington, New Zealand, 1–2 December 2022.
‡ Joint Principal Investigators.

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


Funding: This study is supported by the Health Research Council (HRC) of New Zealand (19/172). The HRC had no role in the study design, writing of the protocol manuscript and in the decision to submit the manuscript for publication.
Institutional Review Board Statement: The study has ethical approval from the Health and Disability Ethics Committees New Zealand (19/STH/151) and written informed consent will be obtained prior to the first appointment. The study is registered with the Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry (www.anzctr.org.au, registration number: ACTRN12620000459921).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the Principal Investigators. The data are not publicly available due to privacy reasons.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.