

Reported timing of introduction to solid foods in Australian infants. Moving closer to six months.

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Inclusion of the wording ‘not before 4 months’ in the 2015 Australasian Society for Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCI) feeding advice has not been associated with a trend towards earlier introduction of solid foods.

A greater understanding of the determinants of infant feeding practises amongst lower socioeconomic, culturally diverse communities is needed.

To reduce risk of food allergy, ASCIA advises deliberate introduction of common food allergens (particularly egg and peanut) before one year of age.

In 2015, based on evidence from randomised controlled trials and meta-analysis ASCIA changed its infant feeding advice to recommend introduction of solid foods at around six months (not before four months) of age when infants show signs of developmental readiness.

This has been promoted by the federally funded National Allergy Council’s Nip Allergies in the Bub project which has developed a range of resources for Health Professionals and parents about infant feeding advice and optimising eczema management.

We aimed to compare the timing of solid food introduction reported by Australian infant feeding studies published before and after changes to the ASCIA infant feeding advice.

Electronic data bases were searched for publications published between 2016 to 2023 describing Australian infant feeding practises, specifically timing of solid food introduction.



Timing of introduction to solid foods in Australian studies

		n	< 4 mo	4-5 mo	5-6 mo	6-7 mo	>7 mo
National Infant Feeding Survey 2010	National	52 000	4.3%	24.1%	32.1%	35.4%	
National Health Survey: 2017-18	National		5.8%	45.7%		46.4%	
National Health Survey: 2022	National		3.3%	32.1		60.6%	
HealthNuts ^a (2007-11)	Melb	4871	3.2%	19.2%	31.9%	40.5%	5.2%
EarlyNut ^b (2017-19)	Melb	1740	2.1%	31.9%	27%	33.7%	5.3%
HSHK Birth cohort ^c (2020)	Sydney	934	13.6%	Median age = 5.5 months (IQR 18-24)			
OzFITS ^d (2022)	National	1140	1%	24%	33%	39%	

Key Findings:

- Seven data sets were identified, including the 2017/8 and 2022 Australian Bureau of Statistics National Health Surveys. The ABS surveys reported a trend towards later solid food introduction, with a greater number of participants starting solid foods closer to six months in the 2022 study.
- Similar findings were reported in the HealthNut, EarlyNut and OzFITs studies.
- The HSHK cohort included lower socioeconomic, culturally diverse communities in Western Sydney reported earlier solid food introduction (prior to or around 4 months) compared to the other studies.

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