



MEDIA RELEASE

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Breast fed babies weaned later than formula fed babies

Mothers who breast feed their babies are also more likely to follow recommendations to delay the introduction of solid foods finds a study of over 1500 infants across 5 European countries published this month in the Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition.

Formula fed infants were given solid foods on average 2 weeks earlier than breast fed infants and were also twice as likely to be introduced to solid foods before the age of 4 months, the recommended minimum age of solids introduction in Europe. Around 37% of formula fed infants had received solid foods before 4 months compared to only 17% of breast fed infants.

Breast fed babies were also more likely to be given family foods than formula fed infants who were more likely to be given commercial infant foods. *“It seems that breastfeeding mothers prefer normal foods to commercially prepared or semi-prepared products; whereas mothers who feed their babies formula and, hence, are already using a commercial product, may have a lower threshold for introducing other commercial products into the infants diet.”* suggested Sonia Schiess, the author of the study, of Dr. von Haunersches Children’s Hospital, in Munich

The study also found marked differences in the timing of introducing solids in different countries – mothers in Belgium were more likely to introduce solid foods before 4 months of age, irrespective of whether they breast fed or not, compared to mothers in Germany. These differences were not due to different recommendations on the introduction of solid foods which are the same in Belgium as in the other countries in the study. It suggests that there are strong cultural, social and parental influences on the timing of weaning.

“Given the increasing evidence that early nutrition and growth has marked effects on both short-term and long-term health, this study highlights the importance of developing strategies to improve complementary feeding practice, especially in formula fed infants.” concluded Sonia Schiess.

ENDS / Notes to Editors follow

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Introduction of Complementary Feeding in 5 European Countries.

Schiess S, Grote V, Scaglioni S, Luque V, Martin F, Stolarczyk A, Vecchi F, Koletzko B; for the European Childhood Obesity Project. J Pediatr Gastroenterol Nutr. 2009 Jun 16.

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Notes to Editors

1. This study was carried out as part of the EU Childhood Obesity Project, which itself is part of a much larger ongoing research project funded by the European Union to investigate the effects of early nutrition on later health outcomes, the Early Nutrition Programming Project - EARNEST (www.metabolic-programming.org). This 5 year research programme is following up a number of intervention trials in early life to see whether the interventions have long term effects on programming various physiological functions. Together with studies in animals to investigate possible mechanisms and observational studies in large numbers of people, the project hopes to gain a better understanding of how conditions in early life, either pre- or post-natally can affect life-long health.
2. **Diary date to note:** Results from the EC-funded Early Nutrition Programming Project (EARNEST) will be presented at **The Power of Programming** international conference 6/8 May 2010 in Munich. For more information log on to <http://www.metabolic-programming.org>.

THE POWER OF PROGRAMMING
International Conference on Developmental
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