

Abstract

Adherence to Breastfeeding and Complementary Feeding Guidelines within the First Foods New Zealand Study [†]

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Abstract: The importance of breastfeeding and the appropriate introduction of complementary feeding are well recognised. Our objective was to investigate adherence to breastfeeding and complementary feeding guidelines in New Zealand (NZ) infants aged 7.0 to 10.0 months, based on the Ministry of Health's healthy eating guidelines for NZ babies and toddlers (0–2 years), which recommend exclusive breastfeeding to “around” six months of age, at which time, complementary feeding should be initiated. This investigation was conducted within the First Foods New Zealand (FFNZ) study. From 2020 to 2022, FFNZ recruited an ethnically diverse sample of 625 infants living in Auckland and Dunedin. Participants completed two study visits, which included two 24-hour diet recalls and the completion of demographic and feeding questionnaires. Infants and caregivers were aged 8.4 (0.8) months (mean (SD)) and 32.7 (4.9) years, respectively. The majority (98%) of caregivers were the infant's mother. More than half of the caregivers had a university education (64.9%) and were not currently employed (66.9%). Approximately half the caregivers were first-time mothers (48.7%). In FFNZ, exclusive breastfeeding was defined as exclusive breastfeeding to at least five and less than seven months of age. Within FFNZ, 43.2% of infants met this guideline. At the time of participation, 66.2% continued to breastfeed. The introduction of solid food at around six months of age was achieved by 75.2% of participants. Most infants were provided puréed foods (80.3%) and were spoon fed (74.1%) when starting solid foods. The findings indicate that most FFNZ infants met guidelines for the age of introduction, texture, and method of feeding complementary foods. However, our guidelines for breastfeeding in NZ were not met to the same extent, indicating the need for further support for NZ whānau to achieve to current breastfeeding recommendations.

Keywords: infant; breastfeeding; complementary feeding; solids; guidelines



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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 may be available from the senior investigator upon reasonable request.

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

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