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Complementary feeding: inappropriate practices in infants

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess feeding practices and dietary intake of healthy infants in three Brazilian municipalities. **Methods:** By means of a prospective study, we analyzed the food record of 7 consecutive days of an intentional sample (quota and weighted sampling) of 179 healthy infants, aged between 4 and 12 months, from the municipalities of Curitiba, São Paulo, and Recife, who were not being exclusively breastfed. Mothers received oral and written information provided by a nutritionist with the purpose of standardizing the feeding data. The computer program NutWin was used to calculate the dietary intake. **Results:** The median of the infants' age was 6.8 months (4.0-12.6 months). We found that 50.3% of the infants were no longer being exclusively breastfed. Of these, 12.0 and 6.7% among the infants younger and older than 6 months, respectively, were fed with infant formulae instead of breast milk. Therefore, most infants received whole cow's milk. Infant formula dilution was correct in only 23.8 and 34.7% of the infants younger and older than 6 months old, respectively. With regards to complementary feeding, we found that the median age was 4 months for its introduction and 5.5 months for the introduction of family diet. There was high quantitative inappropriateness of micronutrient intake for infants between 6 and 12 months old who were not exclusively breastfed, mainly in terms of zinc (75%) and iron (45%). **Conclusion:** The present study showed a high frequency of inappropriate feeding practices and dietary intake in very young infants. These practices may lead to an increased risk of development of chronic diseases in the future.

(Key words: Dietary behavior, disease prevention, infant's nutritional disorders, infant care).
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