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Title

Poor dietary patterns at 1-5 years of age are related to food neophobia and breastfeeding duration but not age of introduction to solids in a relatively advantaged sample

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Abstract: Previous studies have investigated associations between individual foods or food group intake, and breastfeeding duration, age of solid introduction and food neophobia. This study aimed to investigate associations between whole dietary patterns in young children, and breastfeeding duration, age of solid introduction and food neophobia. Parents of children (N=234) aged 1-5 years completed an online questionnaire. Dietary risk scores were calculated using the Toddler (1-3 years) or Preschool (>3-<5 years) Dietary Questionnaires which evaluates the previous week's food-group intake (scored 0-100; higher score=higher risk of poor dietary quality). Neophobia was measured using the Child Food Neophobia scale (1.0-4.0; higher score=more neophobic). Associations were investigated using multivariable linear regression, adjusting for covariates. Children (54% female, 3.0±1.4 years) were from advantaged families and were breastfed until 11.8 (5.0-16.0) months, started solids at 5.6±1.4 months of age, moderately neophobic (2.1±0.7) and at moderate dietary risk (29.2±9.2). Shorter breastfeeding duration ($\beta=-0.21$; $p=0.001$) and poorer child food neophobia scores ($\beta=0.36$; $p<0.001$) were associated with higher dietary risk scores. Age of introduction to solids showed no association with dietary risk ($p=0.744$). These findings suggest that in addition to breastfeeding promotion, supporting parents to manage neophobic behaviour may be important in promoting healthy eating patterns in early childhood.

Keywords: dietary patterns; neophobia; breastfeeding; solid introduction; child; infant feeding practices

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