

Later introduction of baby foods related to lower risk of obesity later in life

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Benjamin Franklin's advice that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" can easily be applied to today's most pressing health issue: obesity. Because taking off extra weight is an almost insurmountable challenge, preventing the progression of weight gain throughout life, especially childhood, is crucial to realizing optimal long-term health.

One area of great interest is the possibility that being breastfed might predispose a person to being lean, and the longer the better. Extended breastfeeding, however, is usually associated with delayed introduction of complementary "baby" foods, and it is possible that this (gain rather than breastfeeding) might influence weight. To investigate this possibility, a team of Danish researchers led by Kim Fleischer Michaelsen investigated these factors in a group of individuals who were studied from birth until adulthood. Their findings, and an accompanying editorial by Michael Kramer, are published in the March 2010 issue of The [American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#).

Neither breastfeeding duration nor timing of complementary foods was related significantly to BMI in childhood, adolescence, or early adulthood. However, at 42 y of age the risk of being overweight decreased with increasing age at introduction of complementary foods. For instance, for each month introduction of vegetables was delayed, the risk of being overweight at 42 y of age was reduced by 10%.

ASN Spokesperson Shelley McGuire, PhD, highlights that "As parents,

we all want to know what we can do to help our children avoid [obesity](#), so research like the study led by Dr. Fleishcher Michaelsen is extremely important- it provides evidence that breastfeeding per se may not have an effect on body weight; instead, it may be other feeding choices (like when baby foods are introduced) that are related to [breastfeeding](#) choices. Most likely, these factors work together to prevent or predispose a growing child to obesity later in life."

Provided by American Society for Nutrition

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