



## **FOOD AND HEALTH** **REPORT ON ASIAN WEANING PROJECT – March 2005**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A small survey of weaning practices amongst Asian families was undertaken in 2001/02. This showed that out of 13 children:

- 10 (77%) started solids between the (then) recommended age
- the majority started with sweet baby foods
- only 4 children (31%) were given meat or chicken by 8/9 months
- 3 children (23%) started on cows milk as the main drink by 8/9 months

Following this, families of ten young babies have been visited by the Dietitian and Asian Link Worker since June 2004, to discuss current guidelines on weaning. Mothers were all non-english speaking.

Five families were re-visited when the babies were 8.5-9.5 months old, to discuss how they had been weaned. This report will discuss the outcome of these five visits.

### **DISCUSSION**

The following discussion relates to the 5 babies re-visited aged between 8.5-9.5 months.

Since the 2002 survey, weaning advice has changed. The recommended age of starting solids is now 6 months, but definitely not before 4 months. Three out of the five children started solids at 6 months, the others at 4.5 and 5.5 months.

Advice was given to start on pureed vegetables, fruit, cereals and suitable family foods, including meat and other iron sources soon after.

Two of the babies were started on fruit, vegetables and porridge, 2 started on tins of egg custard, and the other mum can't remember what she first gave. Four of the children (80%) were having family food including meat (mainly chicken) by 8 or 9 months.

Other advice given was to continue with formula milk as the main drink until 12 months and to always give solids from a spoon and not in the bottle.

1 child (20%) had changed to cows milk as the main drink at 8.5 months, and another would eat rice, chicken curry and yoghurt but was having yoghurt or rice pudding in a bottle in the mornings!

Overall, the advice was not effective in all cases, only 1 out of the 5 families followed all the advice given.

However, the main nutritional problem seen in Asian children is iron deficiency anaemia in children from their 2<sup>nd</sup> year, which can be attributed to practices such as starting cows milk before 12 months and not having meat and other iron-rich food. The visits were effective in that more families introduced iron-rich family foods at an earlier age than previously found in the 2002 survey.

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