

An infant in the home usually means some sleepless nights for mom and dad. Now new research has found that babies introduced to solid foods early might sleep longer and wake less frequently at night than those exclusively breastfed for the first six months.

The study is published in [JAMA Pediatrics](#). It divided 1,303 exclusively breastfed three-month-olds into two groups. One group exclusively breastfed for six months, while the second group continued to breastfeed, but also started introducing solid foods to the infants' diet at three months of age.

Researchers found that infants in the group which introduced solids early slept longer and woke less frequently than those infants that exclusively breastfed.

Both the World Health Organization and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that infants are breastfed for the [first 6 months of their lives](#). So what should parents believe?

According to OSF HealthCare Pediatrician Dr. Rebecca Sierra, while more sleep might be music to the ears of overtired parents, there is no one-size-fits-all answer when it comes to a baby's diet.

"Every baby is different. In this situation we can see there is conflicting data, some saying it's good, some saying it's bad. So I think it's really critical before you make any changes in feeding your baby to talk to your pediatrician," she said.

According to Dr. Sierra, babies need to be able to sit up in order to safely ingest solids, which may not be possible for a majority of infants at three months old. She says another concern about introducing solids so early is a reduction in the amount of breast milk the infant could receive as a result.

"We also don't want to take away from the benefits of the breast milk," said Dr. Sierra. "As we start to introduce more solids, there's a concern that we may give them less of the great nutrition of breast milk if we start to replace some of the breast milk with other food."

Dr. Sierra says that one of the most important things a parent should do before making major changes to an infant's diet is to talk to the child's pediatrician. She says they are ready and willing to tackle any topic a parent brings their way, and asking about early solid introduction shouldn't be taboo.

"I've been in a visit where it didn't come up until the very end that they were putting rice cereal in every bottle. I think some parents are afraid to admit that, or are afraid they are going to be judged. We would much rather you be open with us and tell us exactly what the baby is eating, so we can understand the baby better," advised Dr. Sierra.

How you feed your baby is a personal decision, but one best supported by a pediatrician. For a pediatrician near you, click [here](#). For the OSF HealthCare Breastfeeding Resource Center click [here](#).