

## **Will giving formula or solids at night help baby to sleep better?**

The idea that solids will help your baby sleep is an *old wives' tale* that has been disproved by medical studies. Feeding your baby solids or formula in an attempt to make baby sleep longer is not a good idea for several reasons:

**1. There is no evidence that it will help.** Some babies will sleep worse, due to reactions to the formula or solids (tummy ache, etc. are not uncommon), particularly if baby is younger than around 6 months. Two studies have indicated that adding solids to baby's diet does not cause babies to sleep longer. These studies found no difference in the sleep patterns of babies who received solids before bedtime when compared to babies who were not given solids. Here are the two studies:

Macknin ML, Medendorp SV, Maier MC. Infant sleep and bedtime cereal. *Am J Dis Child* 1989 Sep;143(9):1066-8.

Keane V, et al. Do solids help baby sleep through the night? *Am J Dis Child* 1988; 142: 404-05.

**2. Formula requires a baby's digestive system to work overtime** as baby tries to digest something not specific to the human body. Formula is harder to digest than human milk; thus formula-fed babies tend to go longer between feedings. While this may seem like a benefit, it's probably *not* something we want for our babies' bodies unless there are no other alternatives. There are also health risks to formula use. It certainly has a place in infant feeding but probably shouldn't be used whenever mom's milk - either directly from the source or expressed - is available.

**3. Early introduction of solids (before six months) carries its own set of risks.**

For more information, see the handout *Why Delay Solids?* or [www.kellymom.com/nutrition/solids/](http://www.kellymom.com/nutrition/solids/)

**4. Recent research suggests that longer stretches of sleep are associated with sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and babies who sleep longer may be more vulnerable to SIDS** (see in particular the research of James McKenna, PhD). Some scientists are saying that it appears that long sleep stretches are not "natural" for human infants and that sleep interruptions in the early months may provide a protective factor against SIDS. More research is needed on this subject.

### ***A little more about feeding baby cereal from a bottle...***

Doctors and other experts recommend that you *never* give baby cereal in a bottle unless recommended by baby's doctor for a specific medical condition. Here are some of their reasons:

- It is a choking hazard.
- The cereal takes away from the amount of milk in the bottle (adds carbohydrates and dilutes the nutrient density), and baby may not get adequate milk volume for proper growth and development.
- Baby is being given a higher concentration of calories without being able to regulate her own intake. This can lead to weight problems in the future.

If baby's doctor suggests thickened feedings for reflux, consider asking about alternatives, as many doctors question this practice and it has the potential to cause more harm than good.

For more information and internet resources, see [www.kellymom.com/nutrition/solids](http://www.kellymom.com/nutrition/solids)