

Abstract

Introduction: The BLW method (Baby-Led Weaning) is an increasingly used method of introducing complementary nutrition to infants, in which the phase of feeding a puree with a spoon is completely omitted and larger pieces of food are immediately offered to the infants. There are concerns that children at BLW may cause worse thriving of them.

Aims: The main aim of the work is to compare the somatic parameters of 12 months old infants depending on the method of feeding. The partial goals are to find out how much information parents have about the BLW method and what their child's nutrition looks like in their first year of life.

Methods: Retrospective observational research was carried out by means of a questionnaire survey among parents of toddlers aged from the end of the 12th month to the end of the 18th month. The set consisted of 186 respondents for the evaluation of general information about the child's nutrition. Somatic parameters (head circumference, length/height, weight and weight/length [height] ratio at 12 months) were evaluated in a set of 153 respondents, the data were obtained from the child's health card. Data collection took place at the turn of February and March 2021. The data comparison was performed by t-test and ANOVA test.

Results: The mean weight percentile at 12 months is 48.94 ± 29.28 for traditional spoon feeding (TSF), 45.6 ± 26.94 for BLW, and 43.65 ± 28.84 for the combination. The mean weight value did not differ statistically significantly between BLW and TSF ($p = 0.55035$), not even between all 3 options ($p = 0.63295$). The mean length/height percentile value for the combination of both methods is 48.92 ± 25.71 , for TSF 58.31 ± 26.71 , for BLW 57.38 ± 28.05 . No statistical significance was found between BLW and TSF ($p = 0.86450$), nor between all 3 groups ($p = 0.15331$). The mean head circumference percentile value for TSF is 49.98 ± 30.63 , for BLW 51.32 ± 27.84 , and for the combination of methods 52.59 ± 29.18 . No statistical significance was found between BLW and TSF ($p = 0.81795$), nor between all 3 feeding options ($p = 0.90283$). The weight/length [height] ratio at 12 months is on average 45.21 ± 28.27 for TSF, 43.6 ± 27.59 for BLW and 45.27 ± 26.54 for the combination of methods. No statistical significance was found between BLW and TSF ($p = 0.77152$), nor between all 3 options ($p = 0.94160$).

Conclusion: Somatic parameters do not differ between any methods of introduction of complementary nutrition. Children fed by the BLW method are more independent at 12 months of age and consume family meals with the family at the same table more often than children with traditional spoon feeding. The parents of children fed by TSF have observed less issues during feeding compared to BLW-fed infants.

Key words: BLW (Baby-Led Weaning), complementary food, infant nutrition, somatic parameters