

The 'clean plate club' may turn children into overeaters

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"Finish your broccoli!" Although parents may have good intentions about forcing their kids to eat cold, mushy vegetables, this approach may backfire the very next day, according to new research from Cornell University.

"We found that the more controlling the parents were about telling their child to clean their plate, the more likely the kids, especially the boys, were to request larger portions of sweetened cereal at daycare," says lead author Brian Wansink at the keynote address of the Carolinas HealthCare System Obesity 2009 Conference in Charlotte, NC on Friday.

Researchers asked 63 mothers of preschool-age children the extent to which they tell their children to clean their plates at meals. The researchers then asked the children how many Fruit Loops they would like for their morning snack at day-care. Children were able to fill their bowl until they indicated they had received enough and the bowl of cereal was weighed.

"Parents who force their kids to clean their plates at meals, may be interfering with the development of self-control that children have around food," said co-author Collin Payne of New Mexico State University, "When children have little control over what they eat- or don't eat, they may react by acting out and overeating when away from home."

"Preschool-age children are at a vulnerable age, and are forming eating habits that will follow them throughout their life" says Wansink, author of *Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think*.

He recommends that parents provide moderate portions of a variety of foods, encouraging the child to at least try all of the foods, and let them decide whether they want additional servings.

The research extends a 2008 study, "Consequences of Belonging to the 'Clean Plate Club,'" in the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*.

Source: Cornell Food & Brand Lab

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