

Proximity to convenience stores fosters child obesity

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Childhood obesity is directly related to how close kids live to convenience stores, according to the preliminary findings of a major Canadian study presented at the Entretiens Jacques-Cartier in Lyon, France. The ongoing study is named QUALITY for Quebec Adipose and Lifestyle InvestIgation in Youth.

The main purpose of the study is to better understand the risk factors for cardiovascular disease and [Type 2 diabetes](#) in [children](#). In 2005, some 632 Montreal children and their families were recruited for the investigation. The children came from various neighbourhoods with family incomes ranging from \$31,000 to \$141,000. Of the underage participants, 42 percent were overweight and 22 percent were outright obese.

"Access to convenience stores seems more relevant in obesity than access to fast food restaurants," says senior researcher Tracie Ann Barnett, a professor at the Université de Montréal Department of Social and Preventive Medicine and researcher at the Sainte Justine University Hospital Research Center.

The research team found that access to green spaces may have little influence on the size of 8 to 10-year-olds. While proximity of parks can affect how much children walk, any impact on weight remains to be seen. Families who took part in the QUALITY study will continue to be monitored to verify if proximity to the park has an impact on the long-term weight of children. Dr. Barnett suggests that schools should

establish zones that are free of convenience stores and work harder to compete against fast food chains.

The QUALITY team includes researchers from six Quebec institutions including the Université de Montréal, Concordia University, Université Laval, McGill University and l'INRS-Institut Armand Frappier. The team comprises specialists in pediatrics, endocrinology, cardiology, genetics, nutrition, biochemistry, vascular imaging, health psychology, social sciences, kinesiology, dentistry, epidemiology, biostatistics and public health.

Provided by University of Montreal

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