

New intervention program promotes healthy dietary choices during infancy

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Research to be presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Ingestive Behavior (SSIB), the foremost society for research into all aspects of eating and drinking behavior, shows that teaching first-time mothers to feed their babies "responsively" promotes higher acceptance of vegetables and novel foods by their infants.

Many [infants](#) and toddlers consume too many nutrient-poor but calorie-rich foods, which can lead to overweight and obesity. Early childhood prevention programs can help protect children against obesity by fostering more healthful [eating habits](#); a key mission of the Center for [Childhood Obesity](#) Research at Pennsylvania State University. In the current study, nurses went to the homes of first-time parents to teach them about timing and methods for the introduction of solids to their infants, how to improve their infant's liking and acceptance of new foods such as vegetables using repeated exposure, and how to identify infant hunger and fullness cues. Altogether, the program is designed to teach parents to feed their infants "responsively".

Mothers who received the one year intervention had infants who were more likely to accept vegetables and novel foods. Lead researcher Jennifer Savage from the Center for Childhood Obesity Research says, "These results provide the first evidence that teaching parents how, what, and when to feed their infants can promote healthful eating habits." The intervention also promoted improved growth patterns among infants. "Because early feeding decisions and practices play a critical role in the development of children's food preferences and intake, our intervention

program focuses on teaching parents about how to respond sensitively and appropriately to infant hunger and fullness cues, allowing infants and [toddlers](#) a role in deciding how much to eat, while also providing information on how, what, and when to introduce solids to promote acceptance of new foods," says Savage. The success of the intervention has implications for long-term [obesity](#) prevention.

Provided by Society for the Study of Ingestive Behavior

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