

Study suggests prolonged bottle feeding increases the risk of obesity

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Experts agree that obesity prevention should begin before children enter school. But due to a lack of conclusive data, health care providers often have trouble advising parents about which interventions are the most beneficial. A new study soon to be published in *The Journal of Pediatrics* suggests that limiting prolonged bottle use in children may be an effective way to help prevent obesity.

Dr. Robert Whitaker and Rachel Gooze of the Center for Obesity Research and Education at Temple University, and Dr. Sarah Anderson of The Ohio State University College of Public Health, analyzed data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort, a large national study of children born in 2001. They analyzed data from 6750 children to estimate the association between bottle use at 24 months of age and the risk of obesity at 5.5 years of age.

Of the children studied, 22% were prolonged bottle users, meaning that at 2 years of age they used a bottle as their primary drink container and/or were put to bed with a calorie-containing bottle. Nearly 23% of the prolonged bottle users were obese by the time they were 5.5 years old. "Children who were still using a bottle at 24 months were approximately 30% more likely to be obese at 5.5 years, even after accounting for other factors such as the mother's weight, the child's birth weight, and feeding practices during infancy," Dr. Whitaker notes.

Drinking from a bottle beyond infancy may contribute to obesity by encouraging the child to consume too many calories. "A 24-month-old

girl of average weight and height who is put to bed with an 8-ounce bottle of whole milk would receive approximately 12% of her daily caloric needs from that bottle," Rachel Gooze explains. She notes that weaning [children](#) from the bottle by the time they are 1 year of age is unlikely to cause harm and may prevent [obesity](#). The authors suggest that pediatricians and other health professionals work with parents to find acceptable solutions for stopping [bottle](#) use at the child's first birthday.

More information: The study, reported in "Prolonged Bottle Use and Obesity at 5.5 Years of Age in US Children" by Rachel A. Gooze, MPH, Sarah E. Anderson, PhD, and Robert C. Whitaker, MD, MPH, appears in The Journal of Pediatrics, [DOI 10.1016/j.jpeds.2011.02.037](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2011.02.037), published by Elsevier.

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