

Ruling with an iron fist could make your child pack on pounds

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If you're rigid with rules and skimpy on affection and dialogue with your kids, they have a greater chance of being obese, according to research presented at the American Heart Association's Epidemiology & Prevention/Nutrition, Physical Activity & Metabolism Scientific Sessions 2014.

Researchers followed a nationally representative group of 37,577 Canadian children aged 0 to 11. They compared [kids](#) whose parents are generally affectionate, have reasonable discussions about behavior with their child and set healthy boundaries (authoritative) with those whose parents were strict about limits without much dialogue or affection (authoritarian).

The latter group had a 30 percent higher chance of being obese among kids 2 to 5 years old and a 37 percent higher chance among kids 6 to 11 years.

"Parents should at least be aware of their parenting style," said Lisa Kakinami, Ph.D., a post-doctoral epidemiologist at McGill University in Montreal. "If you're treating your child with a balance of affection and limits—these are the kids who are least likely to be obese."

Researchers compared [parents'](#) answers to a cross-sectional survey. They then categorized [parenting styles](#) and analyzed them with respect to children's body mass index (BMI) percentile.

Researchers also found that poverty was associated with childhood [obesity](#). But parenting style affected obesity regardless of income level.

More than one-third of American children are overweight or obese according to the American Heart Association. Exploring factors at home that may be fueling this public health concern could lead to better prevention and interventions, Kakinami said.

Provided by American Heart Association

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