

# Healthy diet set early in life

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Promoting a healthy diet from infancy is important to prevent childhood obesity and the onset of chronic disease.

This is the finding from a study published in the latest issue of *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*.

Led by Rebecca Byrne from QUT, the study described quantity and diversity of food and drinks consumed by children aged 12-16 months. "The toddler years are a critical age in the development of long-term food preferences, but this is also the age that autonomy, independence and food fussiness begins," Ms Byrne said.

"Childhood obesity in Australia has doubled since 1986, with about 21% of children aged 2-3 years now classified as overweight or obese.

"Liking a nutrient-dense diet that incorporates all five food groups is important, as evidence suggests that food preferences develop at this early age and persist into adulthood.

"Iron deficiency also remains an issue for toddlers in both developed and developing countries.

"Although most toddlers were consuming a diverse diet, the amount and type of meat or meat alternatives was poor. Almost all children were consuming foods we would consider completely unnecessary at this age, such as sweet biscuits."

Provided by Wiley

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