

Kids eat better if their parents went to college

September 18 2014

Children of college-educated parents eat more vegetables and drink less sugar, according to a new study from the University of British Columbia. But it's still not enough, the study goes on to say, as all kids are falling short when it comes to eating healthier at school

The research suggests a parent's educational attainment, an indicator of [socioeconomic status](#), may inform a child's diet.

The study found Vancouver [school](#) children whose parents completed some post-secondary education were 85 per cent more likely to eat vegetables during the school week than those with parents who completed high school or less. Children whose parents graduated from college or university were 67 per cent less likely to consume sugary drinks, like soda pop.

"We can only speculate on the reasons for the disparities," says co-author Jennifer Black, a food, nutrition and health professor in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems. "Higher priced products, like vegetables, may not be the food that gets packed first for vulnerable families that need to make tough choices about [school lunches](#)."

The study revealed, however, that the majority of children, regardless of socioeconomic status, do not consume enough low-fat milk or whole grains on school days, opting instead for packaged [snack foods](#) like potato chips or fast-food style items, like French fries, high in sodium and saturated fat.

"While there are still barriers that exist for low-income children, families from across the socioeconomic spectrum are struggling to get their kids to eat healthy food at school," says Black. "Our findings challenge this common notion that only low-income families feed their kids junk food because it appears wealthy families are not always making healthier choices either."

Background

The study surveyed nearly 1,000 students in Grades 5 to 8, asking them to report their daily food consumption at school, or while travelling to and from school. Less than half of the kids reported consuming fruit, [vegetables](#), whole grains or low-fat milk. Seventeen per cent reported eating fast [food](#), 20 per cent reported eating packaged snack foods and 31 per cent reported drinking [sugary drinks](#) daily. Fifteen per cent of the students reported going hungry.

"Our study provides new insight on what kids are eating, or not eating, in Vancouver public schools," says co-author Naseam Ahmadi, a M.Sc. graduate in human nutrition. "Overall, things aren't looking so good. More work is needed to address the dietary needs of children when they go off to school."

More information: The study, Associations between socio-economic status and school-day dietary intake in a sample of grade 5-8 students in Vancouver, Canada, took place at 26 public schools in 2012. To read the full study, published in Public Health Nutrition, click here: journals.cambridge.org/action/.../Id=S1368980014001499

Provided by University of British Columbia

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