

# What contributes to healthy living behaviors among children? It depends...

December 8 2015

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Juan Carreño de Miranda's "La monstrua desnuda" (The Nude Monster) painting.

Scientists from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) Research Institute participated in several peer-reviewed articles that published today in the *International Journal of Obesity Supplements*. The series (including 16 original contributions) was prepared by the International Study of Childhood Obesity, Lifestyle and the Environment (ISCOLE) research group, a global collective of leading obesity research experts from 12 countries located on five continents.

"These are the first standardized, directly-measured data ever presented across [countries](#) from low- to high-income, and they bust some strongly held beliefs about key correlates of childhood obesity and healthy living behaviours," said Dr. Mark Tremblay, Director of the Healthy Active Living and Obesity (HALO) research group at the CHEO Research Institute and co-Principal Investigator of ISCOLE Canada. "Bottom line, contributors to [childhood obesity](#) can be quite different between countries. These novel findings suggest that a 'one size fits all' approach to obesity prevention is misguided and international insights may lead to innovative, out of the box solutions."

Dr. Jean-Philippe Chaput, HALO scientist at the CHEO Research Institute and co-Principal Investigator of ISCOLE Canada led a first of its kind study to look at the link between sleep patterns and lifestyle behaviours in children from 12 countries in five major geographic regions of the world. The findings reveal that short sleep duration, poor sleep quality and later bedtimes are all associated with unhealthy lifestyle habits. However, the relationships were stronger in high-income countries compared to low/middle income countries; suggesting that interventions aimed at improving sleep and lifestyle behaviours should be culturally adapted to maximize success.

"It is possible that children's days are too structured or regulated in [high-income countries](#) and that there is more flexibility and discretionary time in low-income countries," said Dr. Chaput. "Sleep should not be overlooked by parents or health care practitioners and must be part of the lifestyle package that traditionally has focused on diet and exercise."

Dr. Richard Larouche, Post-doctoral fellow at the CHEO Research Institute led a study examining what distinguishes children who engage in active school transport (that is the use of non-motorized modes such as walking and cycling to get to and from school) from those who do not. Across countries, children who engage in [active transportation](#) are less

likely to be overweight or obese and they are also more physically active.

"Overall, 42.1% of children reported engaging in active transportation, but across countries, this varied from 5.2% in India to 79.4% in Finland. In the Canadian site (Ottawa), 35.1% of children engaged in active transportation," said Dr. Larouche. The factors associated with active school transport varied widely across countries. According to Dr. Larouche, "These findings challenge the belief that there is a common (or universal) set of factors associated with active transportation."

Provided by Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute

Citation: What contributes to healthy living behaviors among children? It depends... (2015, December 8) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-12-contributes-healthy-behaviors-children.html>

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