

Study finds increase in snacking related to parental oversight

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In a new study examining how parenting contributes to snacking, researchers found that parents who have a hands-off approach to feeding children may unknowingly contribute to an increase in children's snacking.

In the 18-month study researchers from Baylor College of Medicine, the University of Michigan and Temple University's College of Public Health determined that more than 40 percent of children's daily intake of added sugars came from snacks. Researchers focused on Hispanic children, as they are disproportionately affected by obesity.

Parents with uninvolved child feeding styles, according to Sheryl Hughes of Baylor College of Medicine, "may be engaged in lots of other aspects of parenting, but make few demands and have a relatively uninvolved approach when it comes to feeding children." The longitudinal study viewed the snacking habits of children from their preschool years into their early school years.

"We know that U.S. kids are consuming a significant proportion of daily calories from snacks," said lead author Kate Bauer of the University of Michigan. "Snacks are not a trivial part of kids' diet—rather, they're pretty central at this stage. The findings suggest that children of uninvolved feeders could potentially be at risk for greater dietary excess from snacks."

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the U.S. Department of

Agriculture recommend two snacks per day for preschool-aged children. However, since 1977 preschoolers in the U.S. - regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity - have consumed an additional 182 calories per day from snacks. Desserts, sugar-sweetened beverages, and salty foods are among the most frequently consumed snacks by U.S. children 2 to 18 years old.

Other findings from the same study suggest that snacking may not pose an appreciable risk of dietary excess for normal-weight preschoolers, but may be problematic for overweight and obese children with greater appetitive drives.

"While [children](#) consume a significant amount of energy from snacks and the [snacks](#) eaten tend to be of poor nutritional quality, the extent to which snacking contributes to excessive dietary intakes was unclear until now," said Jennifer Fisher of Temple University.

Provided by Society for the Study of Ingestive Behavior

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