

# Overweight mothers underestimate their children's weight

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Credit: Washington University in St. Louis

Mothers who are overweight or obese tend to underestimate the weights of their obese children, according to a new study from the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

Researchers, led by Rachel Tabak, research assistant professor, surveyed

230 overweight or obese mothers in St. Louis who had a preschool-aged child.

Nearly half of the mothers considered their overweight or [obese children](#) "about the right weight."

The study, "Associations Between Feeding Practices and Maternal and Child Weight Among Mothers Who do and do not Correctly Identify Their Child's Weight Status," was published in the January issue of *Obesity Science & Practice*.

"This study included only mothers who were overweight or obese, which may, in part, explain the high rate of underestimation," Tabak said. "This is also concerning in the light of recent research showing children of [obese mothers](#) were less likely to recognize their own weight as well as that of their mother and therefore may be related to shifting attitudes toward weight status, where overweight is less recognized because of its prevalence."

Among mothers whose child was overweight or obese, only 20 percent of mothers correctly identified the child as [overweight](#). Forty percent of moms were underestimators.

However, when asked about their [feeding practices](#), those mothers tended to report less pressure to eat and less concern about the child being underweight.

"These [mothers](#) of children with excess weight reported adjusting their feeding practices, despite describing their child as being at the appropriate weight," Tabak said.

**More information:** R. G. Tabak et al. Associations between feeding practices and maternal and child weight among mothers who do and do

not correctly identify their child's weight status, *Obesity Science & Practice* (2016). [DOI: 10.1002/osp4.88](https://doi.org/10.1002/osp4.88)

Provided by Washington University in St. Louis

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