

Two-fold overweight risk for five-year-olds given milk cereal drinks in infancy

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In five-year-old children, the risk for overweight is almost twice as high if they at 12 months had consumed milk cereal drinks every day, a study in the journal *Acta Paediatrica* shows.

"Milk cereal drinks are not bad as such; how it's used is the problem.

That is, when it's seen not as a meal but as an extra, to supplement other food," says Bernt Alm. Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

The researchers behind the study have previously linked consumption of [milk](#) cereal drinks at age six [months](#) to high body mass index (BMI) at ages one year and one and a half years. The study now presented is of the same group of [children](#), several years later.

Various risk factors

The follow-up study comprised 1,870 children in Halland County, Sweden, whose particulars were taken from the Halland Health and Growth Study. Height and weight data have been recorded by the child health services, while the information on their food and beverage intake comes from the parents.

Among the five-year-olds, 11.6 percent were overweight and 2.3 percent had obesity. The risk for overweight or obesity proved to be almost double (factor 1.94) if the children had formerly, at age 12 months, been daily consumers of milk cereal drinks. This risk elevation was independent of other factors.

Examples of other conditions found to make overweight more likely were if the parents had low educational attainment, if they smoked, and if there was a history of obesity in the family. Heredity was the strongest single factor.

Reasons not to use milk cereal drink

In Sweden, children commonly drink milk cereal drinks once to five times a day from age six months. In the study in question, 85 percent of

the children had been daily consumers at 12 months of age.

The Swedish milk cereal drinks consists of milk and flour, and is nutritionally close to porridge, and usually enriched with vitamins and minerals. Similar products exist elsewhere in the world, but are not as common.

"Milk cereal drinks are nutritious and good, and have been used for hundreds of years in Sweden. Getting rid of them isn't a panacea. But if, for example, the child has other [risk](#) factors for overweight, such as heredity, perhaps not using milk [cereal](#) drinks should be considered," Alm says.

More information: Gerd Almquist Tangen et al. Consuming milk cereal drinks at one year of age was associated with a two-fold risk of being overweight at the age of five, *Acta Paediatrica* (2018). [DOI: 10.1111/apa.14666](https://doi.org/10.1111/apa.14666)

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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