

Researchers compare nutritional value of infant and toddler foods

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Infant and toddler foods sold in pouches have lower nutritional value than foods sold in jars and other packaging, according to a new study led by researchers from the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical

Campus.

The findings of the study are published in the current issue of the journal *Nutrition Today*.

"The high level of sugars in some pouches is potentially concerning because pouches are coming to dominate the market for infant and toddler foods," said Kameron Moding, Ph.D., assistant professor of Human Development and Family Studies at Purdue University. "While [pouch](#) products are popular and convenient, the nutritional profiles differ from products sold in other packages, particularly with respect to sugars coming from fruits."

Moding conducted the research for this study as a postdoctoral fellow at CU, working with Susan Johnson, Ph.D., professor of pediatrics at the CU School of Medicine, who is senior author of the article.

The researchers evaluated the contents of 548 products. Of those, products in pouches totaled 274, nearly twice as many as sold in jars or other packaging, such as trays, that were made by companies based in the United States. These products were reviewed for their ingredients and evaluated for their nutritional content and the age of children targeted to consume the product.

One of the key findings was that pouches more commonly had blends of fruits and vegetables than other packaging types. Pouches also were less likely to contain single vegetable products. Previous studies have indicated that incorporating dark green vegetables into the diets of infants and toddlers is limited perhaps because of a lack of commercially prepared single-vegetable products.

"Since [early experiences](#) with flavors and textures of foods may provide the foundation for later [food](#) acceptance, it is important to expose

infants to a wide variety of flavors, textures, and nutrient-dense foods" said Moding.

According to national estimates, between one-third and one-half of infants in the United States consume at least some commercially prepared infant and toddler foods, with infants between six months and eight months of age being most likely to consume these products.

"We need to conduct more studies to understand whether the sugar contents of these pouch products reinforce [infants'](#) innate preference for sweetness and influence the trajectory of the transition to family foods," said Moding. "We do know that infant and [toddler](#) foods that contain fruit purees and juice concentrates may create 'health halos' that lead caregivers to believe such blends are more healthful than they truly are, especially when they are high in sugars, but low in fiber."

More information: Kameron J. Moding et al, Nutritional Content and Ingredients of Commercial Infant and Toddler Food Pouches Compared With Other Packages Available in the United States, *Nutrition Today* (2019). [DOI: 10.1097/NT.0000000000000385](https://doi.org/10.1097/NT.0000000000000385)

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