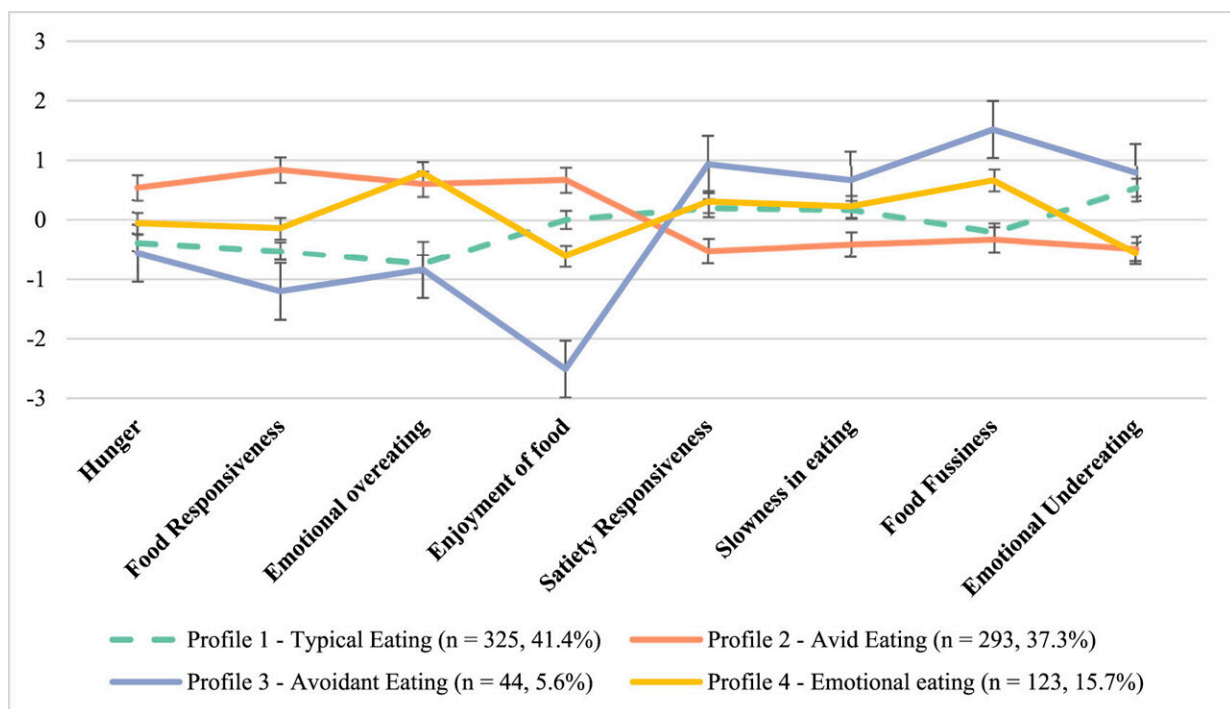


Parents' eating behavior influences how their children respond to food, according to new research

August 12 2024



Mean scores on eight eating behaviors for each of the four adult eating behavior profiles identified by the latent profile analysis (N = 785).

Young children often display similar eating behavior as their parents, with a parent's own eating style influencing how they feed their children, research at Aston University has shown. The research is [published](#) in the

journal *Appetite*.

The work suggests that [parents](#) can help to shape [healthy eating](#) behavior in their [children](#) both by how they themselves eat, as well as how they feed their children.

A team led by Professor Jacqueline Blissett in the School of Psychology and Aston Institute of Health and Neurodevelopment (IHN) at Aston University, asked parents to assess their own eating behavior and looked for associations between those behaviors and those of their children.

The team grouped parents into four eating styles—"typical eating," "avid eating," "[emotional eating](#)" and "avoidant eating." Typical eaters, who made up 41.4% of the sample, have no extreme behaviors. Avid eaters (37.3%) have high food approach traits such as eating in response to food cues in the environment and their emotions, rather than hunger signals. Emotional eaters (15.7%) also eat in response to emotion but do not enjoy food as much as avid eaters. Avoidant eaters (5.6%) are extremely selective about food and have a low enjoyment of eating.

The direct links between child and parent behavior were particularly clear in parents with avid or avoidant eating behaviors, whose children tended to have similar eating behavior. Parents who had avid or emotional eating styles were more likely to use food to soothe or comfort a child, who then in turn displayed avid or emotional eating traits. Where parents with avid or emotional eating traits provided a balanced and varied range of foods, the child was less likely to display the same behavior.

The research follows on from [previous work by the team](#), which identified the four main types of eating behavior in children and linked parental feeding practices to those traits.

Dr. Abigail Pickard, the lead researcher on the project, said, "Parents are a key influence in children's eating [behavior](#) but equally, parents have the perfect opportunity to encourage a [balanced diet](#) and healthy eating from a young age in their children. Therefore, it is important to establish how a parent's eating style is associated with their children's eating style and what factors could be modified to encourage [healthy relationships](#) with food."

She and the team will now look at developing an intervention to support parents to use other ways to regulate emotions, model healthy eating, and create a healthy home food environment. This could help to prevent less favorable eating behaviors being passed down the generations from parent to child.

More information: Abigail Pickard et al, Associations between parent and child latent eating profiles and the role of parental feeding practices, *Appetite* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.appet.2024.107589](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2024.107589)

Provided by Aston University

Citation: Parents' eating behavior influences how their children respond to food, according to new research (2024, August 12) retrieved 12 August 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-08-parents-behavior-children-food.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--