Researchers identify early home and family factors that contribute to obesity

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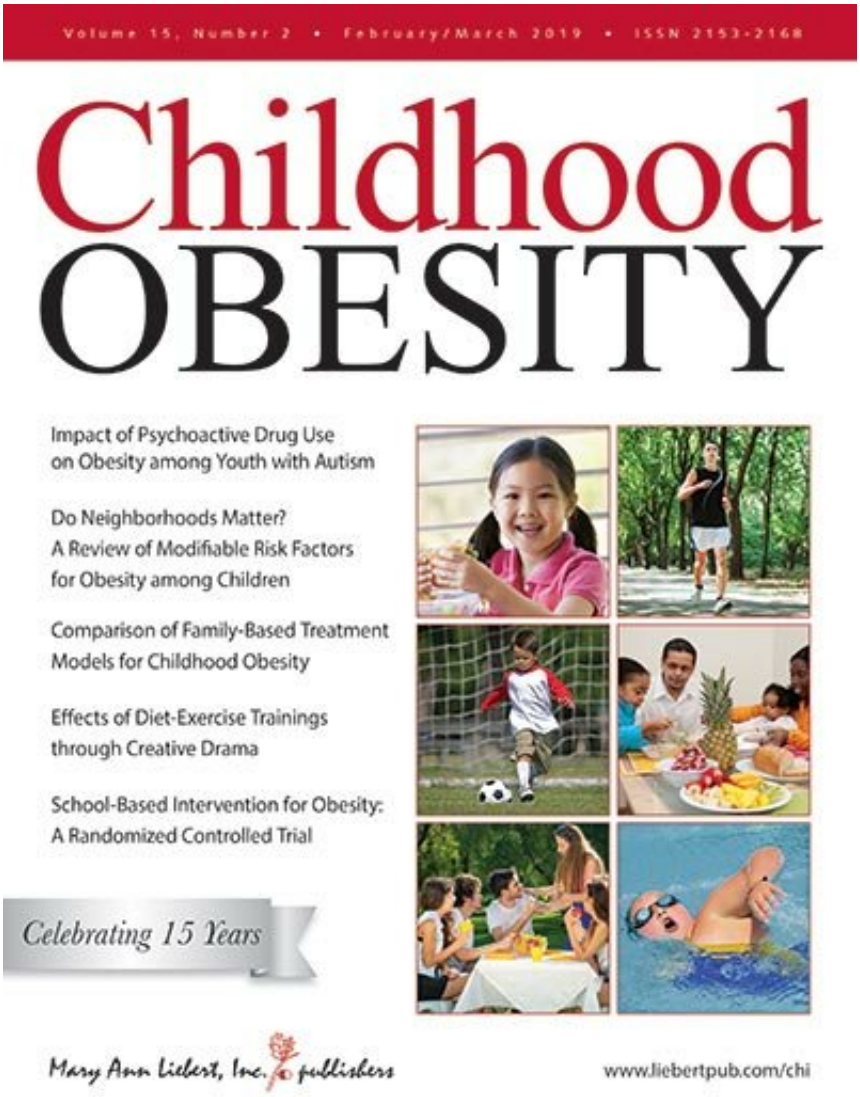

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A new 21-year longitudinal study identified multiple risk factors related to the family and home environment associated with the timing and faster increase in body mass increase (BMI), ultimately leading to overweight or obesity in adulthood. The effects of the home and family characteristics on BMI can emerge as early as age 5, according to the study published in *Childhood Obesity*.

The article entitled "Home and Family Environment Related to Development of Obesity: A 21-Year Longitudinal Study" was coauthored by Patricia East, Ph.D., University of California, San Diego (La Jolla) and colleagues from UC San Diego, San Diego State University, University of Chile (Santiago), and University of Michigan (Ann Arbor). The researchers evaluated 1,000 youths at ages 5, 10, 15, and 21 years. They identified a range of risk factors that could serve as targets for prevention and intervention. These included family stress, absence of the father, maternal depression, and absence of sufficient active stimulation and opportunity for movement and stimulating experiences.

"It is rare to have a study with longitudinal data at multiple times through childhood into the adult years, with a large sample, multiple factors possibly influencing obesity, and sophisticated statistical analysis procedures," says *Childhood Obesity* Editor-in-Chief Tom Baranowski, Ph.D., Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX. "This important study with 1,000 Chilean children from 5 to 21 years of age identified four BMI trajectories through childhood, and the family, home, and neighborhood factors, even from infancy, that differentiated those groups. This study provides key issues for confirmatory research and consideration for intervention."

More information: Patricia East et al, Home and Family Environment Related to Development of Obesity: A 21-Year Longitudinal Study, *Childhood Obesity* (2019). DOI: 10.1089/chi.2018.0222

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