

## Shots - NPR's Health Blog

### Poor Nutrition In Kids Could Tie Obesity And Cavities

Categories: [Fitness & Nutrition](#), [Children's Health](#)

03:55 pm

June 22, 2010

by WHITNEY BLAIR WYCKOFF

Teeth riddled with cavities could point to other health problems. Among children ages 2 to 5, poor nutrition may be a common thread connecting obesity and tooth decay, a new study finds.



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Dental decay in young kids could point to bad nutrition and a higher BMI.

Researchers found that 28 percent of young children who required anesthesia to treat their cavities — either because of the seriousness of the decay or their lack of cooperation — had a BMI indicating they were overweight or obese.

For comparison, data gathered from the [National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey](#) a few years back suggests that 21 percent of children from the same age group are

overweight or obese.

In the study, presented Tuesday at the [annual meeting of the Endocrine Society](#), 65 children fasted for 8 to 12 hours before their procedures. While the children were getting their teeth fixed, their parents filled out questionnaires about the kids' eating habits. The work hasn't been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Dr. [Kathleen Bethin](#), a pediatrician at the University of Buffalo who was the lead author of the study, says previous research clashed about a possible association. But she says what makes her research unique was that it looks at kids who were treated in the operating room — as opposed to outpatient dental clinics.

"I think that our data more strongly suggests that there may be an association — that kids with worse dental decay may have bad nutrition and may be fatter," Bethin tells Shots.

These findings, Bethin says, indicate the dentist's office is a good place to talk about nutrition and obesity risk.

One finding that surprised Bethin: There was no difference in total calories consumed by overweight and healthy-weight kids in her study. That's despite the fact

that 71 percent of kids in the study consumed more calories than normal for their age group.

"I had predicted that the overweight kids would have higher calories," she says. She adds it could be that overweight kids are exercising less or have higher-fat diets. She also said parents of overweight children might think their kids are eating less than they are.

Bethin says the study underscores the importance of teaching young children healthy eating habits — for their teeth and their waistlines.

## comments

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Recent First



**Marjorie Freedman (MarjorieF)** wrote:

High intensity sweeteners are just that--much sweeter than sugar--which means minute amounts are used in products to sweeten them. So they are not perceived by the body as 100X sweeter than sucrose, as used, or no one would eat them--they would be too sickly sweet.

Friday, June 25, 2010 3:27:48 PM

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**Jim Connors (UnbiasedReports)** wrote:

@Marty:

Yup that's why I have been warning people about all these artificial sweeteners that are 10-100-200x sweeter than regular sugar. Its nice to impose a change on the human bodies typical desire for sweetness with a more "habitual" stronger-sweeter taste that people unknowingly would desire after consuming it regularly. Meaning from just liking regular sugars the translation into desiring the artificial sweeteners could be higher considering its stronger taste. Thus adjusting the level one would desire with their "sweet tooth". And if you think I am making this up take a look at what they did to chewing gum to make its taste quote "last longer", all gums have aspartame in them to enhance the sweet long lasting flavor.

I would blame the parents as well who willingly buy their kids junk food, mcdonalds/fast food instead of implementing a proper diet at a young age to influence the child's own personal desire for proper foods.

What most of all boggles me is why people will not take the proper steps to ensure a healthy life for their kids. The power is in their hands to put forth the food to their kids at that age, AND WHATS WORSE-parents do not even mind their own health and diet so how can they manage their kids? Self-infamy.

Friday, June 25, 2010 10:51:01 AM

[Recommend \(0\)](#)

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**Emma Parker (Malory111)** wrote:

If we want to be a strong nation, we have to bring up healthy and right-minded generation. Childhood obesity is a problem that cannot be kept on ice anymore.

Learn some tips about healthy nutrition and share your thoughts on <http://medicationforum.blogspot.com/>

Thursday, June 24, 2010 11:08:12 AM

[Recommend \(0\)](#)

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**Harry Hoxsey (OrangRoti)** wrote:

"Nothing offends patients more than to be asked to change their habits of life. Their desire is to be able to break every known law of health; then when they are called upon to pay the penalty, they expect complete absolution in a bottle or two of medicine. They are content to be patched up sufficiently to continue their practice of self-indulgence in various forms."  
...Dr. Alexander Bryce...

"And we have made of ourselves living cesspools, and driven doctors to invent names for our diseases."

--Plato

Wednesday, June 23, 2010 9:41:10 AM

[Recommend \(3\)](#)

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**Harry Hoxsey (OrangRoti)** wrote:

This is old news. I was reading about this back in the late seventies. In the meanwhile, a major industry has been created around poor diets. The lo-cal fad of the 1980's created more obesity problems than it solved. Thus the medical-industrial complex and Big Pharma could "feed" off all the diseases, new and old. There is no money in healthy people. Got to keep them ill in one way or another. That's capitalism folks. Capitalism is devoted to the principle of controlling rather than remedying evils. Strange how the U.S., the most advanced country on the planet with all these health issues. I travel extensively for years to all regions of the world. No one has health and medical problems to the extent found in the U.S. "No man should be regarded as educated who is ignorant of the general laws that govern life and activity.

...Dr. Herbert M. Shelton...

Wednesday, June 23, 2010 9:39:19 AM

[Recommend \(4\)](#)

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**Marty Kassowitz (mkass)** wrote:

Not much of a surprise here. The amount of sweeteners being pumped into our kids is fantastic and dangerous. Not just sugar but HFCS (high-fructose corn syrup). HFCS is particularly bad and heavily ties in to obesity and other health problems. There's a movement afoot to ban this despite massive industry resistance:

<http://organicconnectmag.com/wp/2010/05/the-impact-of-one-mans-outrage/>

Wednesday, June 23, 2010 1:46:43 AM

[Recommend \(1\)](#)

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**Danny DeGuira (Outofbox)** wrote:

Meg S (KingofWeevils) wrote:

More sugar = more tooth decay

More TV - More Commercials-More Cartoons-More Sugar/Cereals-Toys/McDonalds etc..... NO EXERCISE except video games-We are too afraid to let them go out to play!

Tuesday, June 22, 2010 7:25:29 PM

[Recommend \(1\)](#)

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**Victoria Ferreira (DecaturV)** wrote:

One of the saddest things I ever encountered was a little girl whose mom was a lunchroom worker. Both mom and child would qualify as grossly obese. Both were delightful -- smart, kind, full of vim -- yet the daughter's front teeth were black nubs. This despite the fact that mom had health insurance through the school system. How do we deal with this?

Tuesday, June 22, 2010 7:19:04 PM

[Recommend \(1\)](#)

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**D M (dmengo)** wrote:

Parents really need to start taking responsibility for the health of their children. Stop feeding your kids candy bars, soda, and other junk food that is high in sugar. Problem solved.



Tuesday, June 22, 2010 6:31:25 PM

[Recommend \(1\)](#)

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**Stephanie Frederick (dancinplay)** wrote:

Reading food labels for high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) and not buying anything that it's in would go a long way for this country's health. It's in everything! (bread, ketchup, soft drinks, cereal, salad dressing.....). It's 100x sweeter than regular sugar and research has shown its link to obesity, heart disease, diabetes and hypertension. Google it, watch the film "King Corn" and subscribe to Dr. Mercola's newsletter. You'll be able to witness what a company like Monsanto is dishing out for this country.

Tuesday, June 22, 2010 6:17:19 PM

[Recommend \(6\)](#)

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