



Letter to the Editor

A reply to 'Relationships between children's sugar consumption at home and their food choices and consumption at school lunch'

Dear Madam

In the recent article entitled, 'Relationships Between Children's Sugar Consumption at Home and Their Food Choices and Consumption at School Lunch,' Baghlafl *et al.* highlighted how eating habits a child is exposed to at home translate to nutritional choices made outside of the home at school⁽¹⁾. Sixty-nine percent of students who consumed a low-sugar diet at home opted for a low-sugar food at lunch, while 73 % of students who consumed a high-sugar diet at home selected a high-sugar food at lunch.

I fully agree with these results that are further supported by a 2018 study conducted by Scaglioni *et al.* who concluded that the most important determinant in children's eating habits is what their parents eat and the guidelines they provide to their children⁽²⁾. Additionally, a 2017 study by Yee *et al.* reported availability of food and parental modelling are significantly associated with food consumption in children⁽³⁾. The consistent availability of particular foods shapes childrens' eating preferences which develop into adult eating habits.

The long-term impact of childhood eating habits was examined in the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC)⁽⁴⁾. ALSPAC identified the most rapid growth in consumption of calorically dense foods occurs in infancy and mid-childhood. This spike in high-sugar foods is correlated with an increase in fat mass from mid-childhood to adolescence, a key contributor to the childhood obesity problem continuing into adulthood. The Children in Focus study, a sub-study within the ALSPAC, showed the risk of a child being overweight or obese at age 15 as 2.4, 4.6 and 9.3 times more likely if they are overweight or obese at ages 3, 7 and 11 years old, respectively⁽⁵⁾. Baghlafl's study highlighted the very important point that parental guidance plays a significant role in both the present and future nutritional

health of children and should be implemented early in childhood.

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