

PARENTS' ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS REGARDING HEALTHY WEIGHT FOR THEIR CHILDREN



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Toronto, ON – An Ipsos-Reid survey conducted on behalf of Kraft Canada and Dietitians of Canada finds that most (82%) parents of children age 6-12 think their child is at a “healthy weight,” while just 12% think their child is “overweight” (none think their child is “obese” and 6% think he/she is “underweight”).

Most parents determine that their child is at a healthy weight, overweight, or underweight from their doctor or another health professional (52%) and/or by comparing their child to other kids (45%). Other ways parents determine that their child is at a healthy weight, overweight, or underweight are by considering their height and/or weight (11%), looking at the amount of exercise or physical activity they get (10%), evaluating their diet (9%), or by measuring their BMI or using a growth chart (6%).

And what factors do parents think contributed to their child being at a healthy weight, overweight, or underweight? Diet (70%) and exercise (64%) top the list of volunteered responses. One in seven (14%) mention genetic or medical factors, 13% cite food portions, and another 11% offer some other responses.

Overall good health (62%) is the top reason why parents of children 6-12 years of age think it's important that parents promote a healthy weight for their child. One-quarter (25%) thinks it's important in order for their child to feel good about them self/be happy/have high self-esteem/have a positive body image, 19% think it's important in order to promote long term healthy living habits, and another 19% think it's important that parents promote a



healthy weight for their child in order to avoid health problems. Fewer parents mention longer life expectancy (9%), to be able to play/keep up with other kids (7%), not to be teased (3%), and/or to look like others (2%).

In addition to most parents thinking their child is at a healthy weight, nine in ten parents of children 6-12 years of age think their child's self-esteem (92%), physical activity level (92%), and eating and drinking habits (91%) are "excellent," "very good," or "good."

When asked to think about what they have done (if anything) to help their child have *healthy eating and drinking habits*, 73% indicate that they *ensure* healthy eating for their child by offering healthier choices (45%), having healthier snacks on hand (29%), and preparing meals from scratch (18%). (All other responses were cited by fewer than 5% of respondents) Forty four percent suggest that they *encourage* healthy eating by setting a good example (23%), telling their children what to eat (20%), and educating their child about healthy foods (5%). (All other responses were cited by fewer than 5% of respondents) Another 8% offer some other type of responses, and 4% say they don't do anything to help their child have healthy eating habits.

And which of these do they think were successful? Offering healthier choices (32%) tops the list, followed by setting a good example (19%), telling their children what to eat (15%), having healthier snacks on hand (13%), and preparing meals from scratch (5%).

When it comes to *physical activity*, 75% of parents suggest that they *encourage* physical activity by encouraging recreation/physical activities (40%), encouraging the child to join a sports team (39%), and encouraging them to play outside (18%). (All other responses were cited by fewer than 5% of respondents) Forty three percent indicate that they *ensure* physical activity



by arranging family outings (29%), organizing activities (10%), and by limiting TV and computer time (6%). (All other responses were cited by fewer than 5% of respondents). Another 11% say they don't do anything to encourage physical activity for their child.

And which of these do they think were successful? Encouraging the child to join a sports team (39%) tops the list, followed by encouraging them to do recreation/physical activities (26%), arranging family outings (12%), and encouraging them to play outside (7%).

Finally, when asked to think about the preceding few weeks and how concerned they are about nine goals many parents have for their children, safety (63%), health (61%), and happiness (58%) top the list of issues parents are "very concerned" about. Approximately half are "very concerned" about their child eating and drinking healthfully (53%), having high self-esteem (51%), and/or achieving good grades in school (49%), while fewer are "very concerned" about their child being physically active (42%), being at a healthy weight (35%), and/or having lots of friends (17%).

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/ Kraft Canada/ Dietitians of Canada telephone survey conducted from October 18th to October 24th, 2004. For the survey, Ipsos-Reid interviewed a representative randomly selected sample of 715 adult Canadian parents of children 6-12 years of age who is either most responsible or equally shares responsibility for their child's meals. For questions regarding their own child, parents were asked to refer to one specific child. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.7 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had all Canadian parents of 6-12 year olds responsible for their child's meals been polled. These data were weighted to ensure the sample's regional composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 2001 Census data.



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