



News Release

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As School Starts Again, Moms Express Nutrition Concerns — Yet Real Culprits Often Overlooked

Survey reveals moms' current concerns may distract them from the truly important health and nutrition issues facing their children

WASHINGTON, DC – A recent national survey* revealed that moms are more concerned with individual ingredients rather than their children's overall caloric intake. Since total calories typically determine weight gain and even obesity, parents must understand the basic nutritional facts to keep their kids healthy.

"Many accusations today rely on speculation that tries to link single ingredients, including sweeteners such as high fructose corn syrup, to obesity," said Dr. James M. Rippe, cardiologist and biomedical sciences professor at the University of Central Florida. "Americans are eating more of everything – it's the excess calories and sedentary lifestyle that are having the greatest impact."

Healthy Eating Top of Mind, But Focus Often Misplaced

The survey asked 400 mothers from across the country what their biggest nutrition concerns were for their children as they return to school. When asked what they are concerned with when buying food for their children, half responded with sugar (50%), trans fat (50%) and high fructose corn syrup (49%), while only one quarter cited the caloric content of food.

However, having their children eat healthy is also a top priority for parents. The majority of those surveyed (64%) have concerns about their children's health and nutrition as they return to school, despite the fact that nearly 7 in 10 moms (68%) indicate their children's schools have wellness policies. Concerns included that their children won't eat healthful foods including fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products (20%) and that they will choose junk food when not being supervised or provided with specific food choices (18%).

(See "Survey Key Findings" for more survey statistics)

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Single Ingredients Don't Make Kids Overweight or Obese

“No single food or ingredient is the cause of obesity or overweight children,” said Dr. Rippe. “Eating too many calories and getting too little exercise causes it.”

Excessive calories – from whatever source – can promote weight gain in children and adults alike. Sweet foods are meant to be enjoyed in moderation, Rippe added. The caloric density of high fructose corn syrup is relatively low—only 4 calories per gram, compared to 9 calories per gram for fats.

Research confirms that there is no difference between how our bodies metabolize high fructose corn syrup versus products such as table sugar or honey. Further, high fructose corn syrup contains no artificial or synthetic ingredients. The American Medical Association concluded in June 2008 that “high fructose corn syrup does not appear to contribute to obesity more than other caloric sweeteners.”

Consumption of high fructose corn syrup has been dropping in recent years, yet the rates of obesity and diabetes in the U.S. continue to rise, Rippe added. “And in many other parts of the world, obesity and diabetes are on the rise despite having little or no high fructose corn syrup.”

What Can Moms Do?

A father of four daughters and a practicing physician, Dr. Rippe is uniquely experienced with the challenges of fostering healthy habits among children. He notes:

- Good nutrition is important year-round, so that kids get the nutrients they need to grow and develop properly. But it's especially important to keep in mind as students go back to school because research shows that good nutrition leads to better academic performance and improved behavior.
- Momentum is building for multi-level approaches to health promotion, which means there will be more emphasis on working with schools to improve child health.
- A sugar is a sugar, whether it comes from honey, high fructose corn syrup, table sugar, or fruit juices. Nutritionally they're all the same. Moderation is the key.
- Kids should be encouraged to eat breakfast regularly. Even if time is short, nutritious, on-the-go foods like cereal bars and fruit or milk, are good options.
- Parents and teachers are important role models for their kids when it comes to healthy habits.
- Parents and teachers usually control *when* kids eat, but the kids themselves usually determine *how much* they eat.
- Physical activity is vital. Programs that encourage movement are getting more attention. There is growing interest in “walk to school” programs.

More science-based information on sweeteners is available at www.SweetSurprise.com.

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CRA is the national trade association representing the corn refining (wet milling) industry of the United States. CRA and its predecessors have served this important segment of American agribusiness since 1913. Corn refiners manufacture sweeteners, ethanol, starch, bioproducts, corn oil, and feed products from corn components such as starch, oil, protein, and fiber.

MOM/BACK-TO-SCHOOL Survey Key Findings

Moms don't flag calories as a big concern; individual ingredients get more attention than total calories

- Only about one quarter (26%) of moms surveyed said that calories were “very important”
- About half said that sweeteners, such as sugar and high fructose corn syrup, were “very important”
- Moms cite sugar (50%), and high fructose corn syrup (49%) as equally important to their food purchase decisions
- Saturated fat (47%), fat (36%) and sodium (36%) all were seen as “very important,” ahead of calories

School concerns –bring or buy lunch?

- The majority of mothers (64%) have concerns about their children's health and nutrition as they return to school; even though nearly 7 in 10 (68%) of them indicated that their schools have wellness policies, including those eliminating specific foods and beverages (43%)
- Moms' biggest concerns are:
 - That their kids won't eat healthful foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products (20%)
 - That they will choose “junk food” when not being supervised or provided specific food choices (18%)
 - That their kids won't be as physically active as the summer months when school is in session (15%)

Will my children make the right food choices?

- A majority of mothers (68.5%) profess they have trust in their kids to make healthful food choices, yet the vast majority of mothers (84.2%) believe their kids engage and make detrimental food choices at least some of the time when they eat at school
 - 41.8% believe their kids sometimes only eat a little healthy food and then throw the rest away
 - 34.5% guess their children spend more time socializing than eating during their lunch periods
 - 31.8% believe that their children sometimes throw away healthful foods without eating them
 - 19.8% think their children trade their healthy food for less healthy options
 - 13.3% guess their children buy less healthful foods without their knowledge, particularly those moms of teens 15-18 (43.8%)

Parental Control?

- Moms feel they have about equal control over their children's diets (50.3%) as the videogames (49.7%) they play when left unsupervised
- Interestingly, mothers of older children — teens aged 15-18 — feel they have more control over their children's diets (68.8%) compared to mothers of younger children 7-14 years old (47.3%)

**Wakefield, a national polling firm, conducted the survey between August 18 and August 25, 2008 using an email invitation and an online survey. Results were collected from a random sample of 400 mothers ages 18 and older. Quotas are set to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total U.S. population.*