

## Study reveals reasons behind child obesity

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A study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine shows that childhood obesity may be associated with receptiveness to TV fast food advertising.

A sample of 2,541 American participants, ages 15–23, were surveyed for the study. Respondents viewed a random subset of 20 advertisement frames (with brand names removed) selected from national TV fast-food restaurant advertisements and were then asked if they had seen the advertisement, if they liked it, and if they could name the brand. A TV fast-food advertising receptivity score (a measure of exposure and response) was assigned. Youth with higher receptivity scores were more likely to have obesity than those with lower scores.

Since this study was cross-sectional, the researchers couldn't determine which came first—advertising receptivity or obesity. The researchers note that further studies are needed to better understand the link between food marketing and risk for obesity, in particular studies with more extensive assessments of diet, activity, and marketing exposure.

“Given the concerning rates of obesity in U.S. youth and associated health risks, a better understanding of influences leading to obesity in youth is critical in guiding prevention and public health strategies,” said Auden McClure, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and of Community and Family Medicine at the Geisel School of Medicine and at the Dartmouth Institute. “The more we know about how marketing influences teens and young adults, the better able we are as parents and pediatricians at helping young people to navigate the influx of marketing messages and make good choices.”