

# Australian preschoolers consuming too much saturated fat, Medical Journal of Australia study finds

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- June 18, 2012
- Amy Brown

A unique study of the eating habits of Australian preschoolers has been published today in the Medical Journal of Australia.

The study found that, while children were generally consuming adequate amounts of iron, calcium, zinc and vitamin C, and the recommended amount of calories, 95% of children over two exceeded the recommended **saturated fat** limit of 10% of dietary intake. About one-third of the children surveyed were overweight or obese.

Co-author of the study, Dr Jo Zhou from the University of Adelaide, told Australian Food News, “Parents need to realize that nutrition in early life is very important and affects not just growth but long-term health. Also, a person’s eating patterns as a child influences their adult eating habits.”

When asked what practical advice she would give parents, Dr Zhou said, “From the study we see that most of the children’s intake is generally good. However, we would like to see children consuming less saturated fat.”

The study found that most of the saturated fat the preschoolers were consuming came from dairy products. Dr Zhou said, “Dairy products are very important to children’s nutrition – we want children to eat dairy for calcium – but we’d like parents to consider feeding low-fat dairy products to children over two years of age.”

In addition to eating too much saturated fat, 68% did not eat enough Omega 3 and polyunsaturated fat, and 82% of the children surveyed consumed insufficient amounts of dietary fibre.

The poor nutritional intake was found in a study of children from both rich and poor backgrounds. Nearly all children in some age groups ate more than the recommended intake of saturated fats.

The study, which has taken the last two years to complete, involved door-knocking more than 13,000 homes in Adelaide. The surveyed children were measured, had blood samples taken, and had all the food they consumed over the three-day period weighed and recorded.

“This study is unique – the first in Australia to chart the amount and nutritional value of food children are consuming. We took great care to ensure that the study was of a good geographic and socio-economic representation of Australian children.”

## Reader Comments

### **One Response to “Australian preschoolers consuming too much saturated fat, Medical Journal of Australia study finds”**

1. Silverdragon on June 18th, 2012 9:57 pm

There is absolutely no mention here of sugar. How much sugar were the children ingesting? Fat is so often mis-represented as the cause of obesity, when there is so much evidence that the “obesity epidemic” has precisely correlated with our ever increasing consumption of refined sugars. This kind of article continues to have parents barking up the wrong dietary tree. Meantime, many “low fat” dairy products (e.g. yoghurts) are considerably higher in sugar – perpetuating the problem. Fats tell the body when to feel full and stop eating, simple sugars do not.