

# Mums fail to see their kids as fat

Kate Emery, The West Australian, September 4, 2012



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Parents who do not realise their child is overweight risk setting them up for a lifetime of weight-related health problems, experts warn after research showed many Australian mothers underestimated their child's weight.

Of the 276 mothers asked to describe their toddler's weight, only 4 per cent said they were too heavy, though 32 per cent were classified as overweight. Though only one toddler was underweight, 27 believed their child was too skinny.

The findings will be presented in Sydney at this week's International Congress of Dietetics.

Researcher Rebecca Byrne said many mothers who worried their child did not eat enough mistakenly made them eat everything on the plate or bribed them with treats.

She said this could promote overeating.

"Things have really changed in the last couple of generations," she said. "My parents were told they had to finish everything on their

plate because that was all they would get until the next meal . . . and that just doesn't work today."

She said serious prevention needed to start early to reverse the trend of childhood obesity and set kids up for lifelong good health.

Australian Medical Association WA president Richard Choong said eating habits children learnt - including how to stop eating when they felt full - would probably stay with them for life.

Connolly mother Helena Sillence said she was conscious of what her three children, including three-year-old Kayden, ate and believed it was "borderline child abuse" not to encourage their healthy eating.

"A big part of the problem is there's just so much food in the supermarket, easy food that we're not supposed to eat," Ms Sillence said.

Fast fact - 27 The number of mothers out of 276 surveyed who believed their child was underweight