

Obesity Among Young Low-Income Children Linked to Food Insecurity & Obesity of Mothers, Study Finds



Study in Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics led by Simmons College Professor



BOSTON (January 31, 2013) — Children of low-income, overweight/obese mothers – those living under conditions of chronic mild food insecurity – are at greater risk of becoming obese preschoolers compared to children living in food secure families during the first 3–4 years of life. This was a key finding recently published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, in a study led by [Simmons College Nutrition Professor Elizabeth Metallinos–Katsaras](#). The study is among the first to demonstrate the link between mild food insecurity and early childhood obesity among children of overweight/obese mothers. According to the [U.S. State Department of Agriculture](#), food insecurity without hunger (also known as mild food insecurity) is based on reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet; Food insecurity with hunger is based on reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake; and food security is based on no reported indications of food-access problems or limitations. Metallinos–Katsaras, who directs the Didactic Program in Dietetics in the Department of Nutrition at the Simmons College School of Nursing and Health Sciences, led the study with colleagues from Tufts University Medical School and the University of Rhode Island in Kingston. "The research affirms that these vulnerable groups should be targeted for early interventions to prevent becoming overweight and obese later in life; some of this targeting includes the further alleviation of food insecurity in these high risk groups," said Metallinos–Katsaras. The research is based on analysis of more than

28,300 low-income children participating in a publically funded health and nutrition program in Massachusetts, from 2001–2006. The data was collected in infancy and later in childhood (2 to 4.9). The study found that there is no effect of food insecurity on child weight among children whose mothers are normal weight. However, among children whose mothers were overweight/obese, chronic mild food insecurity increased the risks of child obesity by about 34%. Household food insecurity was based on parent/caretaker responses to a food security survey. The four items in the survey ask about the following aspects of food security status– not having enough money to buy food for a balanced meal, adults cutting the size or skipping meals, and adults skipping meals or not eating for a whole day because there wasn't enough money to buy food. Simmons College (www.simmons.edu) is a nationally recognized private university located in the heart of Boston. It offers a renowned undergraduate education for women, and coeducational graduate programs in health sciences, education, liberal arts, social work, library and information science, business management as well as the nation's first MBA program designed specifically for women. Follow Simmons on Twitter [@SimmonsCollege](https://twitter.com/SimmonsCollege) and [@SimmonsNews](https://twitter.com/SimmonsNews).