



Voices of Child Health in Chicago REPORT

Volume 1 Number 7
July 2019

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

Four in 10 Chicago parents live in a community area with limited food access.

Parents who live in community areas with limited food access were more likely to report challenges to healthy eating for children.

Parents who had unhealthy eating habits themselves were more likely to report challenges to healthy eating for their children.

Food access, parents' nutrition and challenges to healthy eating for kids

In this second report in our two-part series¹ on challenges to healthy eating for kids, we explore how families' food access and parents' weight and nutrition are connected to challenges to healthy eating for kids. To learn more about these issues, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago teamed up with the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) on the 2017–18 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr. We asked 1,002 Chicago parents and guardians (referred to here as parents) about challenges to healthy eating for their children.

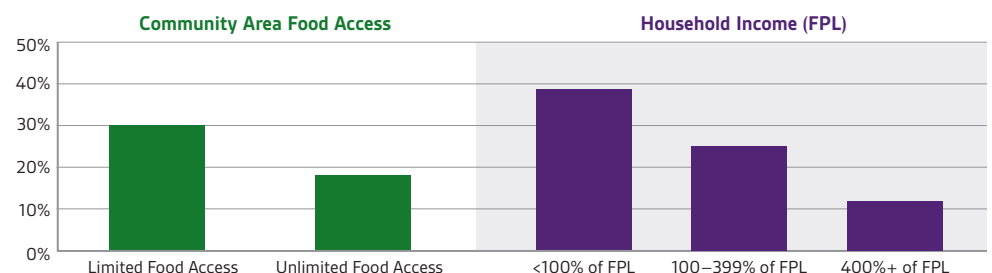
Specifically, we asked parents about the following challenges to healthy eating for their kids: time for sit-down family meals, cost of healthy foods, time it takes to prepare healthy foods, convenience of fast foods, and food advertising. Parents who reported three or more challenges were grouped as having "lots of challenges" (25%). Parents who reported one to two challenges were grouped as having "some challenges" (43%), and parents who reported no challenges to healthy eating for their children were grouped as "no challenge" (32%). We also asked parents questions about their families and their own health and eating habits. To learn more about ways to support healthy eating for your family, visit luriechildrens.org/HealthyEatingPart2.

Access to food and challenges to healthy eating for youth

We examined the connection between living in a community area with limited food access and challenges to healthy eating for kids. We defined community areas as having limited food access if 10% or more of the residents were low income and lived more than a half mile from the nearest supermarket, supercenter or large grocery store, based on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) definition.² In our sample, 44% of parents lived in community areas that had limited food access. Parents who lived in a community area that had limited food access were more likely to experience lots of challenges to healthy eating for their children (30%) than those who lived in a community area without limited food access (18%) (Figure 1).

Similarly, when we examined household income, which is sometimes used as a proxy for food access^{3,4}, we found that parents with a household income below the federal poverty line (FPL) were more likely to have lots of challenges to healthy eating for their children (39%) than parents in households between 100–399% of the FPL (25%), and those at 400% or more above the FPL (12%).

Figure 1. Proportions of parents with lots of challenges to healthy eating for kids by measures of food access



Together these findings suggest that when parents have a harder time accessing healthy foods, they also experience greater challenges in getting their children to eat healthy foods.

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Parent weight and nutrition in Chicago

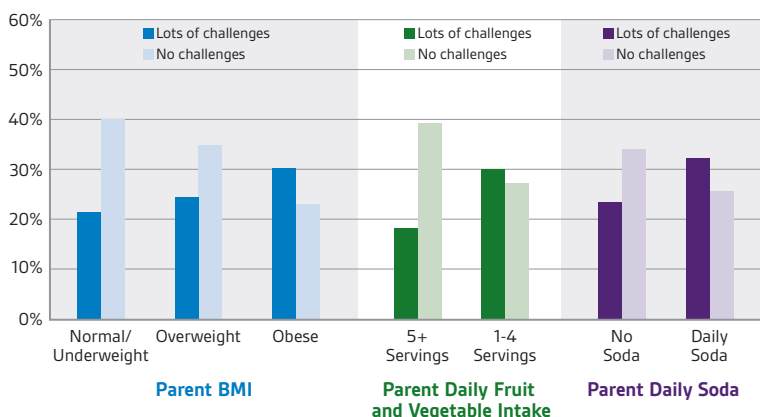
Among parents in our survey, 35% were obese, 34% were overweight and 31% were normal or underweight, which is similar to obesity and overweight rates for U.S. adults.⁵ The majority of parents consumed between one and four servings of fruits and vegetables per day (60%), 32% consumed five or more fruits and vegetables daily, and only 8% consumed less than one fruit or vegetable daily. The majority of parents did not drink soda on a daily basis (73%).

How are parent weight and nutrition connected to challenges to healthy eating for kids?

We also examined how parents' weight and nutrition were connected to challenges to healthy eating for their children. Parents who were obese or overweight were more likely to report lots of challenges to healthy eating for their children (29% and 24%, respectively) than parents who were normal weight or below (21%) (Figure 2).

Additionally, parents who consumed one to four fruits and vegetables per day were more likely to report lots of challenges to healthy eating for their children (29%) than parents who consumed five or more fruits and vegetables daily (18%). Parents who drank soda on a daily basis were also more likely to report lots of challenges to healthy eating for their children (32%) than those who did not drink soda daily (23%).

Figure 2. Proportions of parents with lots of challenges and no challenges to healthy eating for kids, by parent health and eating habits



These findings suggest a connection between parent habits and the healthy eating habits of their children. If parents have limited control over their own healthy food intake due to limited food access mentioned above, this may impact their children as well. This is consistent with other work that has shown that children whose parents are obese are more likely to be overweight or obese in childhood⁶ and adulthood.⁷ There is even evidence that having a grandparent who is obese increases the likelihood that a child will be overweight.⁸

HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

This report presents findings from the 2017–18 Healthy Chicago Survey, Jr., administered by the Chicago Department of Public Health in collaboration with Lurie Children's. The survey was administered via phone interviews from December 2017 through June 2018. The sample consisted of 3,310 adults in Chicago, 1,002 of whom were the parent, step-parent or guardian (referred to as "parents" in this report) of at least one child under 18 years of age living in the household. The survey cooperation rate was 18%. All analyses were conducted with statistical weighting so that they are representative of the adult population of the City of Chicago during the time period of data collection. For more information about health in your community, visit chicagohealthatlas.org.

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This report was developed and published as a partnership:



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This project is supported in part by an anonymous foundation, the Founders' Board of Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, and the Chicago Department of Public Health.