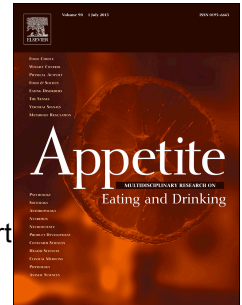


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Is it still a real treat? Adults' treat provision to children

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Is it still a real treat? Adults' treat food provision to children

Abstract

Consumption of high-energy foods in the absence of hunger has been identified as a key target to address in the area of obesity. For children, such foods are often provided by adults as treats. There is limited understating of adults' treat giving. The present study aimed to understand adults' provision of treats to children on the Island of Ireland. A total of 1039 participants, including parents, grandparents, child minders and education practitioners completed a face-to-face survey in their home. Participants defined their treats for children primarily as 'something nice', 'deserved/earned' and 'something special'. The top three motivations for treat foods provision were 'to reward for good behaviour' (42.3%), 'because the child(ren) ask' (42.2%) and 'to make the child(ren) feel better' (29.4%). Almost all participants would provide treat foods at celebrations and 52.5% always did so. In addition, 68% participants had structured weekly and/or daily treat for children. Treats provided to children were dominated by energy-dense foods. The top three were sweets, chocolates and ice-creams, being used by 45.2%, 45.1% and 38.8% participants. Variations were observed across different adult groups, in terms of their treat giving behaviour. The main observation was that adults' treat foods provision has become habitual. The findings can help develop targeted strategies to encourage the reduction or replacement of food treats for children.

Keywords: snacking, obesity, children, child feeding, parenting

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