



NURTURING RESULTS

**HEALTHY HABITS FOR PRESCHOOLERS
STUDY**

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Healthy Habits for Preschoolers Study

Nurturing Results conducted the Healthy Habits for Preschoolers Study in order to better understand the nutritional habits of preschoolers and the key influences driving their behaviors. The study was conducted with 1154 moms of preschoolers across the country in late December, 2007.

The results were encouraging. While moms still need more education about proper nutrition for their children as well as support from food manufacturers to provide healthy and convenient options for their young children, they are generally in tune to the best ways to set the stage for lifelong healthy habits for their children.

In contrast to the popular press, the study reveals that parents have a deep concern and commitment to teach children proper nutritional habits. Importantly, the study also points out that moms take primary responsibility for the role of training their children with healthy lifestyles and diet. They do not blame the media, schools or other outside forces for influencing the health of their children. They view themselves and their children as the key influencers in the nutritional decisions made in their family.

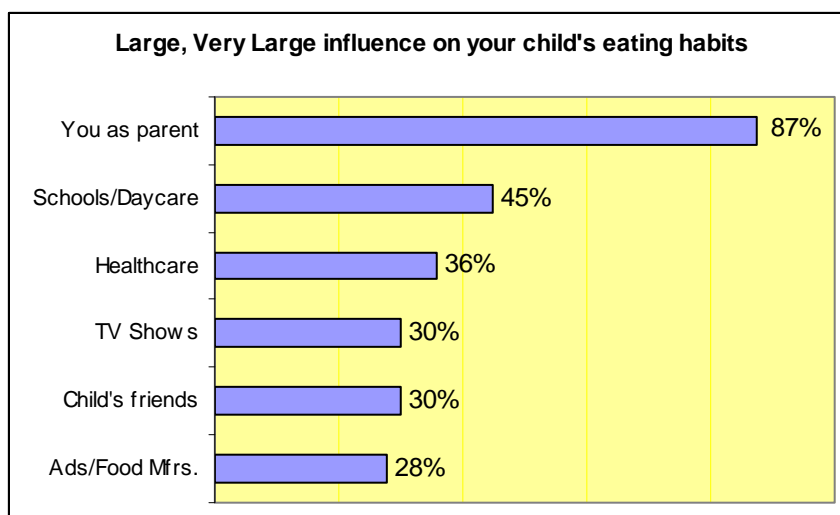
Here are a few key findings:

- 93% of moms understand that early nutritional habits influence the lifelong eating habits of their children
- Moms are confident with their ability to provide proper nutrition for their kids; 74% believe they are either pretty good or excellent at creating a healthy lifestyle for their children
- Moms in the study are committed to the “family dinner”; 71% of the moms say their family eats dinner together 5 to 7 times per week
- 92% of preschoolers engage in active play daily; young children are naturally active
- Nearly 2/3 of moms say they pack children fresh fruits and vegetables regularly in their child’s lunchbox
- Nearly 60% of parents pack a juice box/pouch in lunchboxes for their kids; awareness levels that juice boxes contain 4 to 5 teaspoons of sugar is low
- The largest challenges to providing proper nutrition for kids is a lack of convenient and healthy offerings and a lack of time or energy to prepare healthy meals

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Moms take responsibility for nutritional habits

Parents are well aware the food they give their children at a young age will affect their lifelong food choices. 93% of respondents said they believe the foods their children eat now will help define their palette.

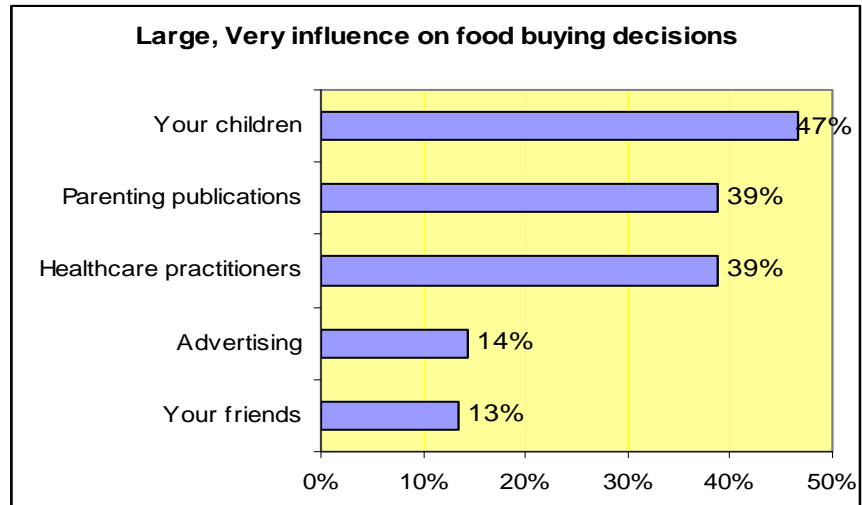


While some of the popular media makes it appear as though parents have abdicated their responsibility to teach their child healthy eating habits, parents do not agree. 87% of parents in the survey said they play a large or very large role in the health and

nutritional habits of their child. They take primary responsibility for this important role. Schools, daycares and health care professionals also play a role. TV shows, child's friends, and ads/food manufacturers only play a role for about 1/3 of moms. There is an opportunity for food manufacturers and children's content developers to provide education which can support a mom in her quest to instill lifelong healthy eating habits for her children. Some children's programming is already providing good messages about eating healthy snacks versus junk food. Some shows are now modeling healthy exercise habits as well. Food

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manufacturers could provide more support by promoting healthy snacks for kids on children's networks. Some have already begun this initiative by sponsoring shows like Sesame Street and other popular shows on public television, but more could be done to support parents in their efforts.

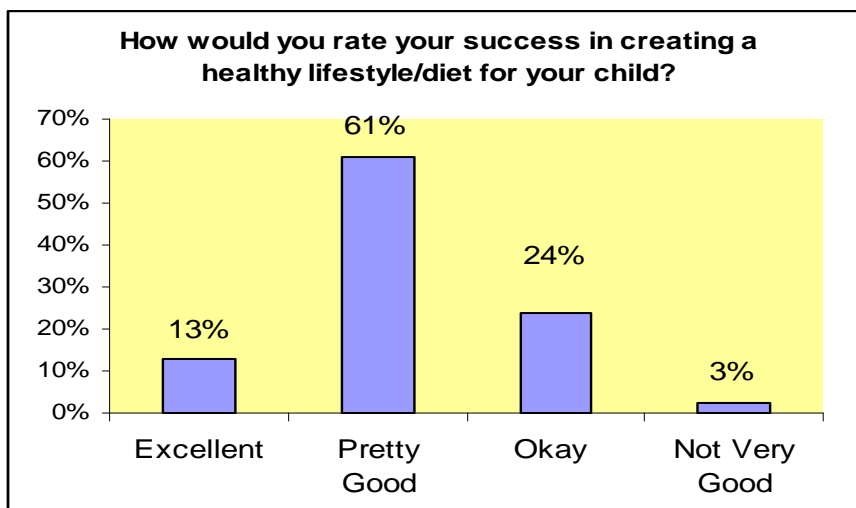


While parents in the study believe they are the largest influencer of nutritional habits, they do also believe their child influences their food purchasing decisions. Nearly half of the sample said their child plays a large or very role in the food buying decision. While they believe that advertising doesn't have a huge influence on them as parents, they may not recognize the advertising power being influenced over them through their children.

Parenting publications and healthcare practitioners also have a large influence on food buying decisions. These journals need to be well-informed about nutrition in order to fully inform moms about the best methods for improving the health and nutrition of young children.

Interestingly, moms in the survey do not give much credit to their own friends for influencing their buying decisions. This is somewhat counter to the common belief that moms look to other moms for product recommendations.

Moms are confident of their abilities

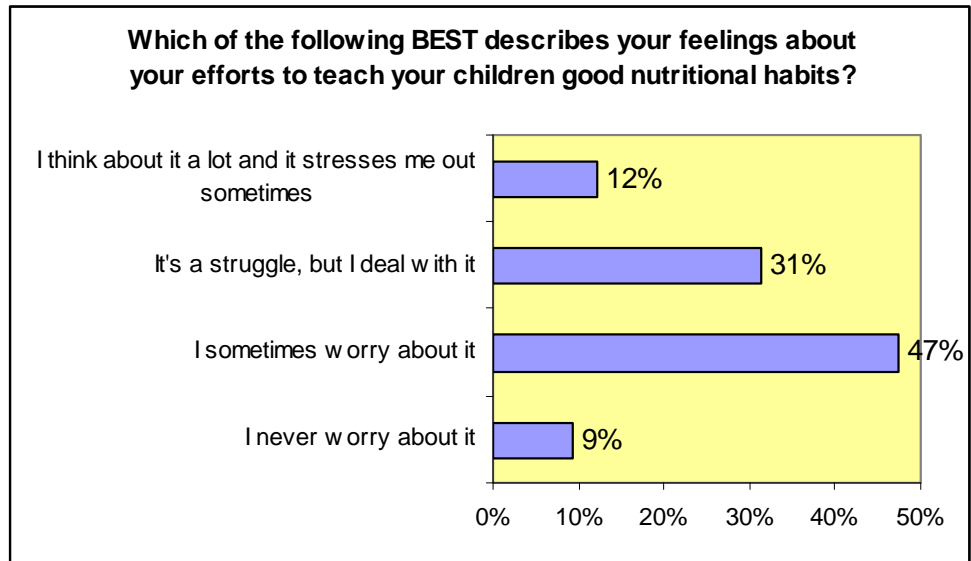


2/3 of moms in the study believe they are doing a pretty good job of creating healthy eating habits and a healthy lifestyle for their child. Only 3% believe they are not doing a good job with this important task. Generally moms

seem pretty confident in their ability to teach their child positive lifelong eating habits.

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Most moms are concerned about teaching their children good nutritional habits, but they seem to handle it well most of the time. Sometimes when their children are particularly reluctant to eat vegetables or eat at all, moms get concerned, but they seem to take it in stride.



Moms take their job seriously



Moms are label readers. Only 5% of moms in the survey say they never read the label or nutritional information when purchasing a new product. 30% of moms read the label every time they buy something new. Labels could play an even more important role if products for children used children's nutritional requirements, not adults. Their calorie, fat, sugar and carbohydrate requirements are much lower than adults. Using adult nutritional requirements does not provide parents a true picture of the value of a product

for their children. Nutritional labels could also make it easier for moms of kid with food allergies. New regulations have been put in place by the federal government which will require better food allergy information.

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The Healthy Habits for Preschoolers Study suggests that parents of young children prioritize eating dinner together as a family. 71% of the moms who responded to the survey say their family eats together at least 5 to 6 times per week. 42% say they eat dinner together every night.

Supportive of their child's shape and size



Most moms believe their child is just the right height and weight. Only 8.1% of survey respondents believe their child is overweight. According to a study released recently, however, 14% or nearly twice as many preschool children are in fact overweight. Parents need to be educated about the signs of obesity and unhealthy eating habits which might lead to obesity so they are more attuned to

the weight of their child and to methods to help keep their child within the healthy range. Parents have an opportunity at early ages before the influences of school and peers become too great to positively influence their child's eating habits.

Young children are NOT couch potatoes



While 64% of young children watch television or use the Internet at least one hour per day, 92% are involved with active play, reading or organized activities for the same amount of time. This study suggests young children are “naturally” active. In fact, some studies are now suggesting that parents do NOT introduce the concept of “exercise” to young children because they are naturally active.



Only 6% of the moms surveyed said their child never engaged in active play.

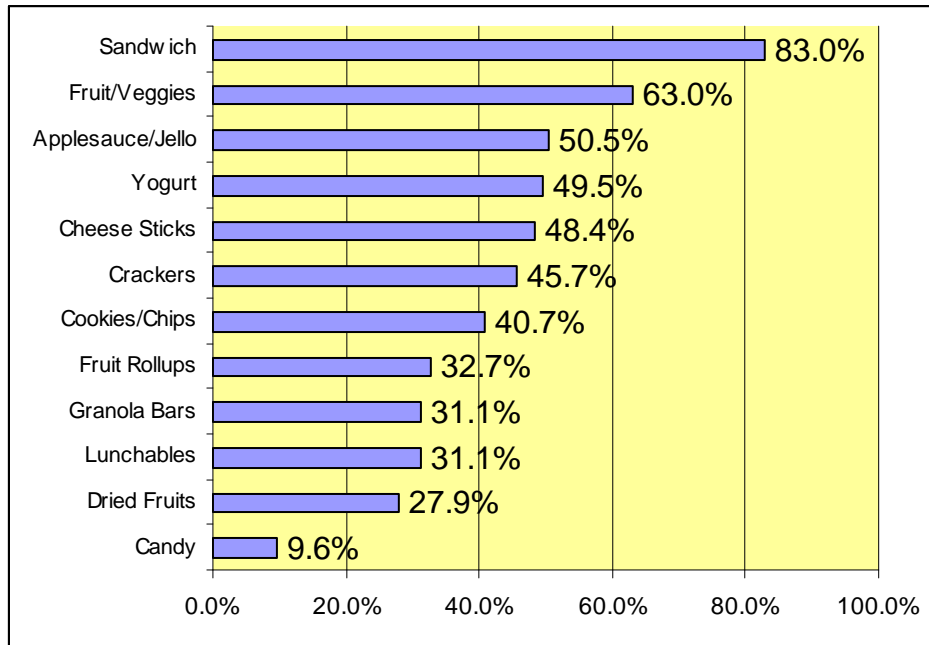
Healthy Habits for Lunchboxes



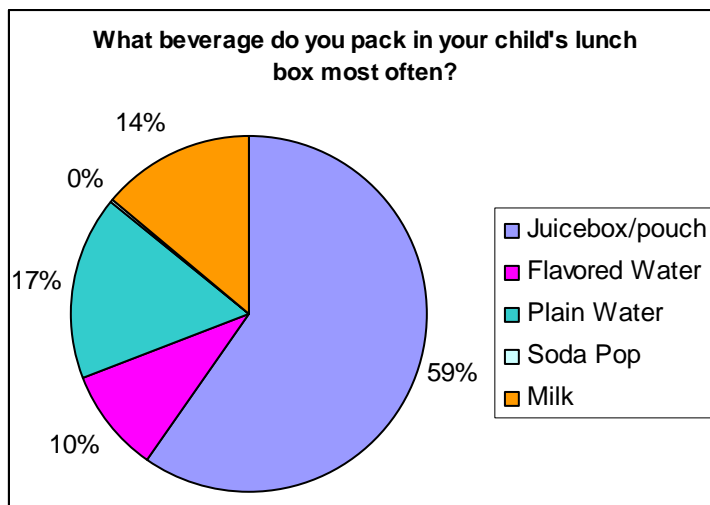
It is important for moms to set the stage for proper eating habits at lunchtime by the items they include in preschooler’s lunchboxes. Moms in the Healthy Habits for Preschoolers survey demonstrate a commitment to including healthy foods for the mid-day meal. Nearly 2/3 of moms give their children fresh fruits and veggies in their lunch. Nearly 50% of the moms in the survey give their child applesauce, yogurt or cheese sticks in their lunch regularly as well. Less than 10% of moms in the survey say they give their children candy in their lunchbox.

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Nearly 1/3 of moms include granola bars, fruit roll-ups and pre-packaged snacks. While these items are not as healthy as fresh fruits and vegetables, they are very convenient because they are packaged in individual servings which travel well in lunchboxes.



Beverage habits are not quite as healthy

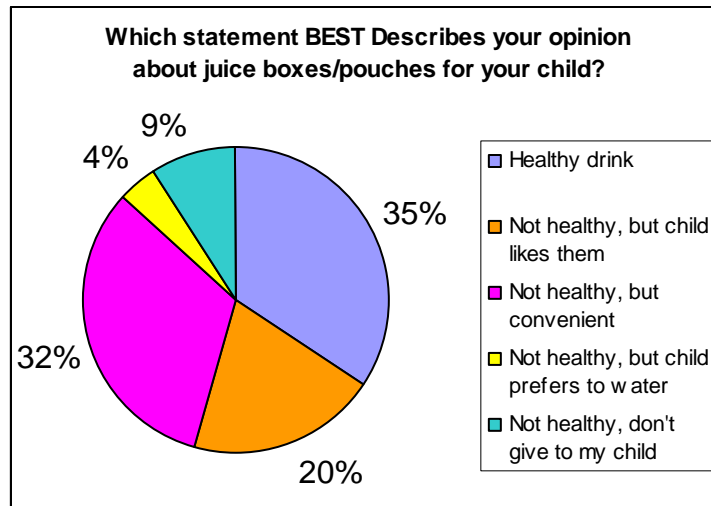


Nearly 60% of respondents pack a juice box or pouch in their child's lunchbox daily. Water is the second most popular drink. 25.2% of moms provide their children plain water or flavored water in their lunch.

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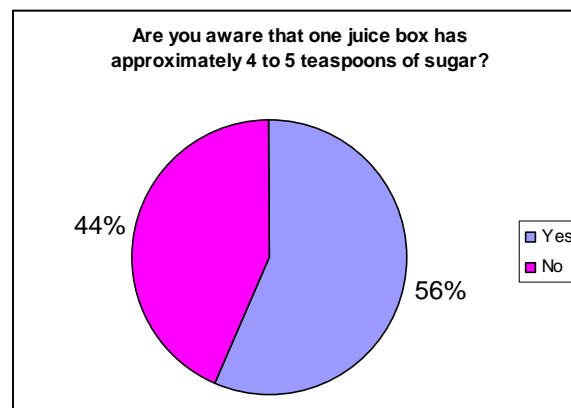
While juice boxes/pouches have 4 to 5 teaspoons of sugar and about 120 calories on average, they are not the healthiest option for beverages, yet 35% of moms still believe juice is a healthy beverage. Only 9% say that juice boxes are not healthy and they will not give them to their children. Another 1/3 of the respondents say they know that juice boxes/pouches are not healthy, but they are convenient and easy to pack. About 25% of users know juice boxes/pouches are not healthy, but they say their child likes them or prefers them to water. This segment of children has been exposed to the sugary taste of juice at an early age and their palette now rejects less sweet beverage options.

Moms of preschoolers can train their children to like and even prefer water if they provide this as the beverage of choice and drink water as THEIR beverage of choice. Scientific studies have proven that parents “set” their child’s palette in the first three years of life. If a child is exposed to juice early on, their taste buds get used to and even crave the taste of sugar. While a child may not show signs of obesity in the preschool years, parents are setting the stage for sugar cravings which can lead to unhealthy eating habits later in life.



More than half of the moms in the survey said they know that juice boxes contain 4 to 5 teaspoons of sugar per drink. In the verbatim comments, moms revealed that juice boxes contain “natural sugar” so some believe they are not unhealthy. They are not aware that sugar is sugar and that juice boxes are not in fact a healthy drink because of the sugar content. Children are much better off to eat a fresh apple or fresh grapes than to drink juices.

Once moms in the study were made aware of the sugar content of juices, nearly 60% said they would be less likely to purchase juice boxes in the future. Efforts need to be made to inform moms about the sugar content in juice boxes to take one small step to decrease sugar intake of young children.



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Beverage manufacturers are starting to help parents deal with the problem of too much sugar in children's beverages. Some companies are now starting to market water and flavored water in fun, kid-friendly packaging to provide an engaging alternative to sugary juices and sodas.



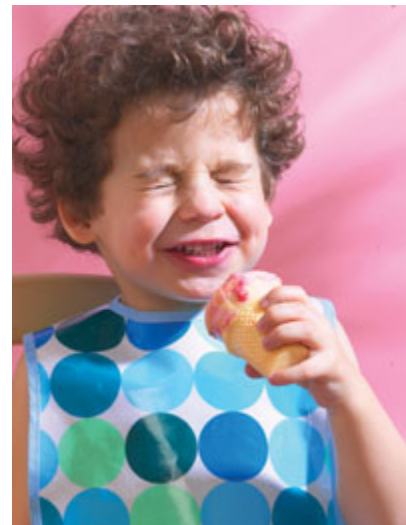
Treats play a special role

Parents say they give their children treats for special occasions, primarily. Moms in the survey are realistic about their child's need to have treats occasionally.

Generally parents believe they are in control of when and why treats are given to their children.

One mom in the survey said:

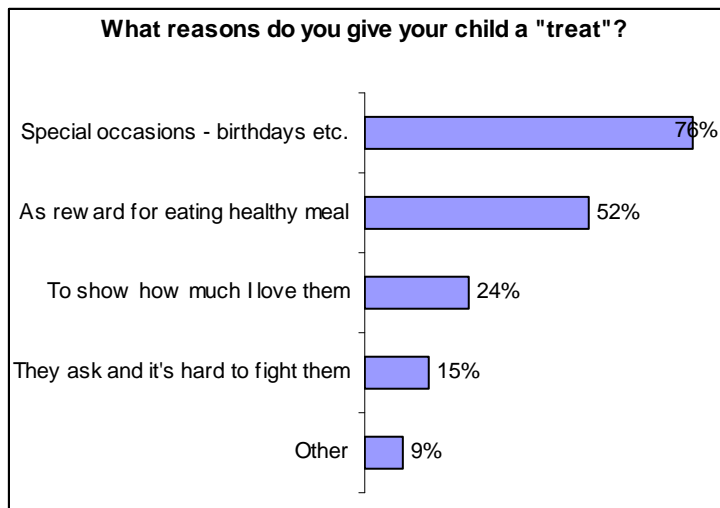
"I don't want to deny her the "bad" foods completely - she's going to eat them eventually and I don't want them to seem forbidden so that she gorges herself on them when she has the chance."



Moms like to reward their young children with a treat if they eaten healthy for most of the day.

"I know what they have eaten during the day and if it was healthy then they can have a treat for dessert."

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Some parents who worry their child is underweight believe treats are one way for their child to gain weight. They don't worry as much about the quality of the food as its ability to put weight on their child.

"It is hard for my daughter to gain weight so anything that helps her helps her gain weight is okay."

Some moms have redefined "treats". They give their children fresh fruits and vegetables instead of candy or ice cream.

"I give her veggies and fresh fruit for "treats."

Treats are also used to help comfort children when they are sick.

"When they are sick, I often get juice boxes to encourage them to drink a lot to prevent dehydration."

Still others think treats are a critical part of childhood which should be celebrated.

"Treats are a fun part of childhood and life. Why go on if you can't have treats??"

Ways to help moms

Nearly 50% of respondents believe there is a lack of convenient and healthy choices to help moms create and maintain a healthy diet for their children. Items like single serving carrots and raisins and pre-sliced apples help, but there be more ways to make fresh fruits and vegetables fun and engaging. Some fruit companies are now starting to add character licenses to their products which are a great way to increase kid appeal.

Many items which are convenient and fun for children are not as healthy as they could be. They may be made with trans fats, high fructose corn syrup or other unhealthy ingredients. Sometimes product quality gets sacrificed when a company secures the rights to a licensed character. In order to be able to afford

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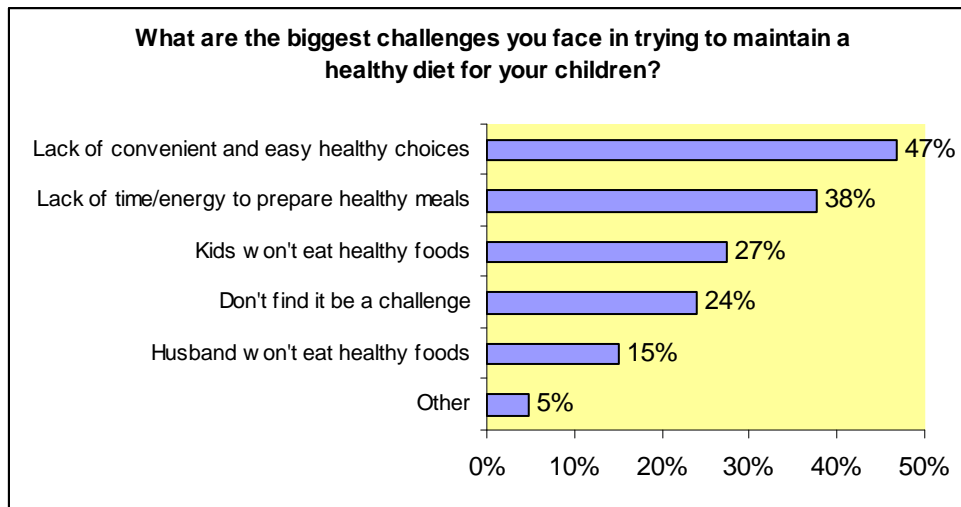
the cost of the license and still maintain a healthy product margin, companies resort to sacrificing the quality of the ingredients.

The second biggest challenge to healthy eating is a lack of time or energy to prepare healthy meals. According to the US Census Bureau, 56% of percent of moms with young children are working outside of the home or own their own business. To make matters worse, many preschoolers today are not only attending preschool, they are also involved with one or more organized activities like soccer, dance or swimming. Each of these activities takes time away from focusing on healthy eating.

The third biggest challenge to healthy eating is the preference of the child. Some children are just naturally finicky eaters. Others are given sugary or high carbohydrate foods regularly like spaghetti, chicken fingers or other unhealthy food. One mom in the study said:

“When my daughter was young I would give her macaroni and cheese every day for lunch while I made myself a salad. Now that she’s 6 she will have nothing to do with salad or anything green. She craves pasta and bread all the time. I wish I had given her salad and veggies like I was eating instead of mac and cheese.”

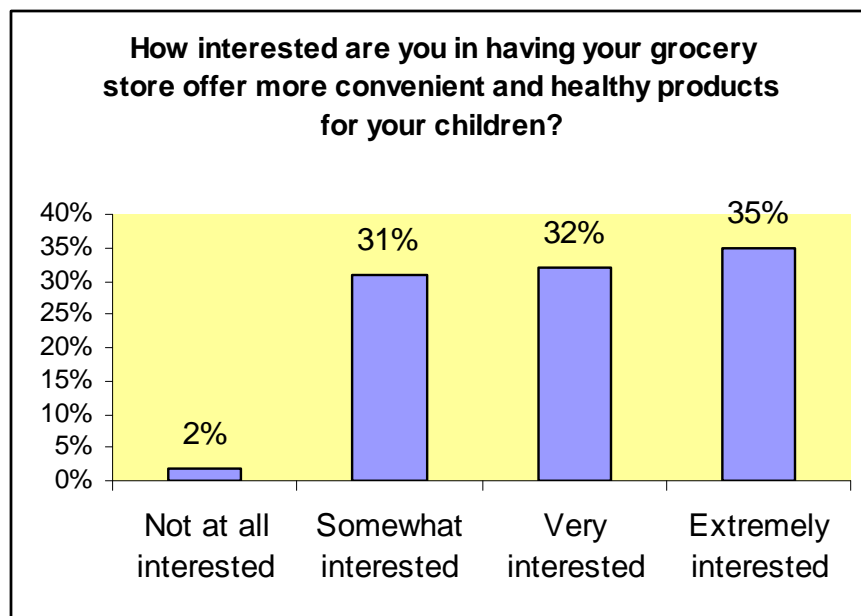
Nearly ¼ of the respondents said they don’t find healthy eating to be a challenge. They have found methods to provide healthy foods for their children consistently.



2/3 of moms in the Healthy Habits for Preschoolers Survey said they are very or extremely interested in buying more convenient and healthy options for their preschoolers at their grocery store. Only 2% are not at all interested in being offered more convenient and healthy foods for their kids.

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Many grocery stores across the country have begun to offer more organic foods and more kid-appropriate healthy snacks. Some stores have created healthy food sections. The latest trend is for grocery stores to integrate healthy, organic options into the store shelves right next to less healthy options.



Conclusions

Moms today are generally in tune with the importance of their role to help their children create lifelong healthy nutritional habits. They are becoming more aware of the need to provide healthy foods and at least 5 fruits and vegetables a day. They do face challenges, however. A large percentage of moms are working outside the home and a large percentage of preschoolers are busy themselves with organized activities. Food and beverage manufacturers can help parents by providing more convenient yet healthy items for moms to include in their child's lunchbox and to be used for meals and snack time. They can also prioritize the quality of the food being offered to children and be cognizant of the amount of sugar included knowing that early eating habits will set a child's palette for sugar, and fat for the long run. More products with organic and natural ingredients, less sugar and no trans fats will help children live longer, healthier and more productive lives. In particular beverage companies can help parents by offering fun ways to help make water, not juice the beverage of choice. All food and beverage manufacturers can help improve the diet of young children by promoting healthy and fresh options on children's television programs.

About the Authors

Nurturing Results (<http://www.nurturingresults.com>) is a leading research and consulting firm focused on the children's market. The firm is led by former executives of leading children's product companies and global food retailers. The firm specializes in working with companies committed to offering only the highest quality products and services for children and families. The firm's clients include Hasbro, Playskool, Leapfrog, General Mills, Crayola, Dr. Seuss and others. Nurturing Results helps companies aggressively grow their business by positioning the company for success with breakthrough marketing programs, research and content development. The firm also helps companies secure distribution at national retailers.



Marilyn Wilson, CEO of Nurturing Results, has a depth of expertise in developing and marketing products, services and content. She was formerly VP Global Marketing at Fisher-Price. While there she launched over 1000 new products and services including a highly successful joint venture with Microsoft. She started Nurturing Results in order to apply her depth of children's products expertise to high quality products in the organic food,