

Kids follow unhealthy role models - parents

Fat teenagers rejoice, you can now blame your parents and the first five years of your life for your plumpness.

New Brisbane research proves fat parents are more likely to have fat children who will grow into fat teenagers if they don't learn healthy living by age five.

The findings are the latest from the one of the world's longest running health studies - the Mater-University of Queensland Study of Pregnancy.

About 3000 children in Brisbane had their body mass index (weight in kilograms divided by height in metres square) recorded at age five then at 14.

Their birthweight, gestational age in weeks, weight gain per day for the first six months after birth, duration of breastfeeding, childhood mental health, parental education, family income and maternal depression were also recorded.

Lead researcher, Dr Abdullah Al Mamun from UQ's School of Population Health, said overweight or obese girls at age five were more likely than overweight boys to return to healthy weights at 14 years old.

Fat children at both ages were usually heavier babies who had bigger daily weight increases in their first six months.

And if children were overweight at five years old, they were more likely to stay fat at 14 years old.

The latest findings from the Mater study have been published in the International Journal of Obesity.

"These findings suggest that to reduce the public health burden of childhood and adolescence overweight or obesity, early prevention of childhood obesity is important," the authors wrote.

"The strong association between parental overweight status and adverse changes in their children suggests that tackling adult obesity is likely to be important both for their own health and for that of their offspring."

Dr Mamun's paper was co-written, with Mater and University of Bristol researchers and fellow UQ researcher and Mater Study founder, Professor Jake Najman.

Dr Mamun is now investigating the link between high blood pressure and obesity in children.

He has also applied for a research grant to help families fight obesity through changing meal patterns, improving family relationships and communication or psychological means.

The Mater Study was started in 1978 by Professor Najman as a health and social study of 7223 pregnant women.

Over the decades the study has been widened to include prenatal, postnatal, childhood and adolescent periods of the child with those babies now in their early 20s.

Source: University of Queensland

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