

# Children with working mothers at greater risk of obesity even if father is a stay-at-home parent

By Sadie Whiteloks



A new study urges stay-at-home parents to realise the importance of their child's eating habits

Children with working mothers are at greater risk of obesity even if their father is a stay-at-home parent, according to experts.

Previous findings have shown that youngsters whose mothers are in full-time employment are more likely to be overweight, but a new study highlights that men about the house fail to realise the importance of their child's eating habits.

Study authors says they are not trying to 'say men are scum', but that it is important for both parents to discuss day-to-day responsibilities, including food preparation and mealtimes.

As the recession has led to an increase in the number of stay-at-home fathers John Cawley, from Cornell University noted that more research is needed into 'how parents cooperate to feed and raise and nurture their kids in the wake of changes in the economy.'

Cawley and Feng Liu used data on almost 25,000 families from a yearly survey of how Americans spend their time. Data showed that on average women who worked spent 127 fewer minutes per day with their children than stay-at-home mothers.

However stay-at-home fathers failed to offset the difference.

'We're not trying to say men are scum,' Cawley told BuzzFeed, as the study didn't indicate if dads whose spouses work are outsourcing prepared food or care providers, such as baby sitters.

Cawley and Liu noted that preparing meals from scratch and eating as a family could decrease a child's risk of obesity.



Experts believe home-cooked meals will help curb obesity rates

They also suggest that schools could offer healthier food and better physical education.

The findings were published in the June issue of *Economics & Human Biology*.

Last year a study published in the journal *Child Development*, revealed that children in the sixth grade – aged 11 or 12 – whose mothers who were employed either full or part-time were six times more likely to be overweight.

The number of adolescents who are overweight has tripled in the US since 1980 and the prevalence among younger children has more than doubled.