



7th May 2008: Healthy Choices' Survey Findings

The majority of parents are actively trying to make healthy food choices for their family, according to the results of a recent survey on children's diet & lifestyle, conducted by parenting website, www.RollerCoaster.ie.

Almost 8 in 10 parents acknowledged that there is a child obesity problem in Ireland and there is widespread recognition that parents are responsible for helping their children maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle.

The majority of parents check the ingredients or nutritional information on labels of food they buy. However there is a need for improvements in food labelling information, as over half of parents do not find the information on food labels easy to understand. Parents would like to see the introduction of traffic light labelling similar to that being used in the UK.

Despite the fact that over half of parents surveyed feel 'very informed' about healthy eating choices for their family, one third of parents still find it hard to say no to their child's demands for treats.

Main Findings

- 80% of parents regularly check the ingredients/nutritional information on food labels
- Almost half of parents (48%) do not find the ingredients/nutritional information on food labels easy to understand
- Almost 8 in 10 Parents (77%) think Ireland has a child obesity problem
- Parents are most to blame for Ireland's growing child obesity problem, according to the majority of those surveyed (73%)
- 13% feel advertisers are most to blame for the problem of child obesity and 11% blame food manufacturers
- 1/3 of Parents find it hard to say no to their child's demands for treats
- 1 in 5 children spend 3-4 hours a day watching TV/Playing electronic games
- 42% of children eat sweets several times a week; 16% eat sweets every day.
- Over half of parents surveyed feel 'very informed' about healthy eating choices

The online survey entitled 'Healthy Choices' was conducted on RollerCoaster.ie – Ireland's Website for Parents in January to April 2008. 416 parents took part.

Survey Findings

1. Do you think Ireland has a child obesity problem?

Yes – 318 – 77% | No - 96 – 23% (2 Non Respondents)

2. How often does your child eat sweets?

Every Day – 66 – 16%

Several Times a Week – 174 – 42%

Once a Week – 96 – 23%

Rarely – 63 – 15%

Never - 17 – 4%

3. Do you find it hard to say no to your child's demands for treats?

Yes – 134 – 33% | No - 274 – 67% (8 Non Respondents)

4. How many hours on average per day does your child spend watching TV and/or playing electronic games.

0 – 38 – 9%

1 hour – 138 – 34%

2 hours – 143 – 35%

3 hours – 63 – 15%

4 hours – 21 – 5%

5+ hours - 9 – 2%

(4 Non Respondents)

5. Do you feel your child gets enough exercise?

Yes – 300 – 73% | No - 110 – 27% (6 Non Respondents)

6. Do you check the ingredients/nutritional information on food labels?

Always – 141 – 35%

Often – 184 – 45%

Rarely – 67 – 16%

Never - 16 – 4%

(8 non-respondents)

7. Is the ingredients/nutritional information on food labels easy to understand?

Yes – 212 – 52% | No - 195 – 48% (9 non-respondents)

8. Are you well-informed about healthy eating choices for your family?

Very Informed – 215 – 52%

Somewhat Informed – 190 – 46%

Not Informed - 7 – 2%

9. Who is MOST to blame for Ireland's growing child-obesity problem?

Government - 10 – 2%

Advertising Industry – 55 – 13%

Parents – 299 – 73%

Food Manufacturers – 44 – 11%

Schools / No Problem – 4 – 1%

(4 Non Respondents)