

Factors associated with yoghurt consumption in preschool children

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Osteoporosis is a global public health issue and in Ireland, hospitalisations due to osteoporotic-type fractures are increasing; the projected cost of which is estimated to be €304,350,613 for 2046⁽¹⁾. Adequate calcium intake in childhood is essential for the optimisation of peak bone mass and dairy products are an important source of calcium in children's diets⁽²⁾. As food preferences developed in early life can persist into adulthood, intervening to promote dairy consumption before school age may be an effective strategy in improving dairy consumption further into childhood and adolescence. There has been a lack of interventions targeting dairy consumption alone in preschool-aged children, and a further understanding of the determinants of dairy consumption in this age group is required. The aim of this research is to explore the factors associated with yoghurt consumption among 2–5 year-old children.

This is a cross-sectional analysis of questionnaires completed by parents of 2–5 year-old children as part of the evaluation of a pilot of a milk provision and nutrition education intervention in 12 Irish preschools. Logistic regression was used to examine the association between children's yoghurt consumption and child-related factors (infant feeding; demographics; consumption of fruit and vegetables, milk, cheese and sugar-sweetened beverages) and parent-related factors (food choice motives, parent consumption, parental education).

Questionnaire responses from 319 parents of 2–5 year-old children (49.5% female) were included in the present analysis. Ninety-two percent of respondents were mothers of preschool children and fifty-six percent of parents had achieved third level education or higher. Fifty percent of children consumed yoghurt daily. In a logistic regression model (N = 280), daily consumption of yoghurt among preschool-aged children was positively associated with milk consumption (OR = 2.712; 95% CI = 1.25, 5.884; P = 0.012) cheese consumption (OR = 6.719; 95% CI = 3.207, 14.078; P < 0.001) and consumption of fruit flavoured drinks such as cordials (OR = 2.163; 95% CI 1.153, 4.055 P = 0.016). Children were three times more likely to consume yoghurt daily if their parents also consumed yoghurt daily (OR = 3.20; 95% CI = 1.557, 6.576; P = 0.002). Children's yoghurt consumption was not significantly associated with parents' food choice motives or education level.

This research highlights the importance of incorporating parents into intervention designs promoting dairy intake among preschool children, due to their direct impact on children's yoghurt consumption. Sugar content should be considered when choosing yoghurts for children, as the association with fruit-flavoured drink consumption may suggest a preference for sweet foods.

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References

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