Low-Income Mothers More Likely to Overfeed Infants

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Low-income mothers who are single or suffer from depressionare more likely to overfeed infants, a practice that can lead to excess weightgain, according to a study presented at the Pediatric Academic Societies annualmeeting and reported by HealthDay News.

For the study, researchers at New York University looked atdata from more than 250 low-income mothers, primarily in Latino households.Researchers found that almost a quarter of the mothers added cereal to babybottles and that mothers with depression were 15 times more likely to do thesame compared to those without depression.

“Our results are especially concerning because they suggestthat depressed mothers may be more likely to add cereal to the bottle, whichmay increase their children’s risk of obesity,” said lead author and generalacademic pediatrics fellow Candice Taylor Lucas, MD, an associate professor ofpediatrics at the NYU School of Medicine and Bellevue Hospital Center in NewYork City.

Researchers also found that single moms were much morelikely to add cereal to bottles as well as moms who felt their babies hademotional reactions to daily routines.

“Overall, these findings demonstrate that stressorsprevalent in low-income households, such as depression, single parenthood andassociated infant behavioral challenges, influence feeding practices likely topromote obesity,” Lucas said.

Researchers are concerned that these feeding practices willlead to weight gain and eventually obesity. Currently, the U.S. Centers forDisease Control and Prevention describes obesity as a national epidemic, onethat is a major contributor to some of the leading causes of death, includingheart disease, stroke and diabetes. And Latinos are at high risk: In 2009, theywere 1.2 times as likely to be obese than non-Latino whites. This study ishoping to reverse the trend.

As Lucas summed it up: “It is important to provide supportfor parents related to healthy feeding practices if we are to end the epidemicof childhood obesity.”

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