

SDSU Study Reveals Eating at Friends and Family's Puts Kids at Higher Risk for Obesity

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SAN DIEGO (Monday, May 5, 2008) — More time spent eating away from home could put kids at higher risk for obesity, according to a San Diego State University study published in this month's research journal *Obesity*.

SDSU public health researcher Guadalupe X. Ayala has found that consuming foods at the home of relatives, neighbors or friends once a week or more is associated with a higher risk of obesity in children.

Youngsters who ate away from home often drank more sugar-sweetened beverages and ate more sweet and savory snacks, such as chips and ice cream.

This research is the first to consider settings outside the home, apart from restaurants, as potential risk factors for childhood obesity. Ayala also found that eating at restaurants weekly or more often not only increased the child's risk of obesity, but the parents' as well.

The study focused on children in kindergarten through 2nd grade from 13 Southern California elementary schools. Ayala said that Latino children may be at particular risk because their culture is more family-oriented.

"Latinos appear to rely on friends and family for support and childcare more than other cultures do," Ayala said.

She recommended parents discuss their children's health risks with friends and family members who may serve as secondary caretakers.

"Encourage the caretakers to reinforce at-home food rules and to negotiate what food is available to your child," Ayala said.

The research was done in conjunction with SDSU's Graduate School for Public Health and the San Diego Center for Prevention Research. The San Diego Prevention Research Center is an interdisciplinary academic-community partnership committed to conducting research and education to promote physical activity and improve the health of Latino populations. The research center seeks to translate research into practices that are meaningful to Latino communities and that can be sustained through formal and informal community networks.