

# ***Project:*** Vermont Healthy Kids' Meals: Parents' Perspectives

***Community Agency:*** American Heart Association

## ***Abstract:***

**Introduction.** Childhood obesity has been increasing for decades.<sup>1</sup> Options on kids' menus in restaurants typically involve unhealthy choices such as fries, chicken fingers, and grilled cheese, with soda as the drink. When healthy options are the default choice, children are more likely to eat them.<sup>3,4</sup> Though initially skeptical of modifications, restaurants will enact changes to maintain customer satisfaction and profits,<sup>5</sup> and there is no significant difference in price of healthier kids' meals.<sup>6</sup>

**Methods.** 187 paper and electronic surveys were administered throughout Vermont to explore attitudes towards the availability, cost, and importance of healthy kids' meals, as well as income, education, and children in the household. Open-ended questions sought parental opinions.

**Results.** 69% of parents believe healthier food options at restaurants would cost more; however, 95% were willing to pay more. 89% of parents reported feeling concerned or highly concerned about sugary drinks, and 62% of parents were very likely to choose the healthier food option at a restaurant. The majority of parents who reported difficulty in finding healthy meals felt the amount of fruits/vegetables was the most important nutritional factor. Low income Vermonters were most concerned about cost.

**Conclusions.** The majority of parents are concerned about kids' meal nutrition and are likely to purchase healthier options, even at increased prices. If restaurants enact changes to kids' menus, prices should remain the same to ensure families of all socioeconomic classes will be able to purchase healthier meals. Priority modifications to meals should include increased amounts of fruits/vegetables and elimination of added sugar.

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## **References.**

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