

Part-time working moms have healthiest kids

Threatening to rouse the colicky baby of modern family life, a new Australian study suggests that children of women who work part time are healthier than those of mothers who work full time or who are not in the workforce.

Published by the journal *Social Science & Medicine*, the study looked at the impact of mothers' hours of paid work on the lifestyle and weight of about 2,500 children at ages 4-5 years and 6-7 years.

It found that at both ages, children whose mothers worked part time were less likely to be overweight, watched less TV, ate less junk food and were more physically active than children whose mothers were working full time or not in paid employment.

"What we didn't expect was the finding that the children of mothers in part-time work were healthier than children of mothers at home full time," study co-author Jan Nicholson wrote by e-mail from the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute in Melbourne, Australia. "What our results may show is that women who work part time, perhaps compared to women at home full time, may have a greater focus on healthy family activities because their time with their kids is limited."

She and other experts caution against oversimplification. Nicholson said having more than one young child, for example, may make it difficult for stay-at-home moms to juggle family time.

Dana Points, editor of *Parents* magazine, said the study indicated that employment status made indirect contributions to children's lifestyles — via TV viewing and the snacking that seems to accompany it.

Parental distress, postpartum depression and lack of social support could account for children having less-healthy lifestyles, said Tracy Moran, an assistant professor and child psychologist at the Erikson Institute.

— Wendy Donahue, *Tribune Newspapers*



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A study says kids whose moms work part time are healthier than kids with moms who work full time or not at all.

