

# Bad Eating Habits Start in the Womb

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## ***The New York Times:***

THE solution to one of America's most vexing problems — our soaring rates of obesity and diet-related diseases — may have its roots in early childhood, and even in utero.

Researchers at the Monell Chemical Senses Center, a nonprofit research organization in Philadelphia, have found that babies born to mothers who eat a diverse and varied diet while pregnant and breast-feeding are more open to a wide range of flavors. They've also found that babies who follow that diet after weaning carry those preferences into childhood and adulthood. Researchers believe that the taste preferences that develop at crucial periods in infancy have lasting effects for life. In fact, changing food preferences beyond toddlerhood appears to be extremely difficult.

“What's really interesting about children is, the preferences they form during the first years of life actually predict what they'll eat later,” said Julie Mennella, a biopsychologist and researcher at the Monell Center. “Dietary patterns track from early to later childhood but once they are formed, once they get older, it's really difficult to change — witness how hard it is to change the adult. You can, but it's just harder. Where you start, is where you end up.”

Read the whole story: [\*The New York Times\*](#)