

Study: Calif. kids regularly eat fast food, soda consumption declining

By Cynthia H. Craft, Sacramento Bee

The good news is that overall soda consumption is on the decline among California's young children. The flip side? A new UCLA survey says kids are still being fed fast food meals on a regular basis.

Though kids' fast food meals and sodas usually come packaged together, there's been a sharp decline in kids ages 2 to 5 drinking sugar-sweetened beverages, UCLA researchers said. Ten years ago, about 40 percent of young children drank soda the previous day of the survey. By 2009, that proportion dropped to 16 percent.

But the decrease in soda drinking, seen as a positive by nutritionists, is offset by a steady rate of fast food meal consumption, the survey found. In both 2007 and 2009, about two-thirds of California children ate at least one fast food meal daily, and about 29 percent ate the meals twice a week or more.

Researchers concerned about children's health say the fast food habit is a factor in rising obesity rates for children. About one-fourth of California kids ages two to five are overweight or obese.

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