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# Acculturation of Mexican-American mothers influences child feeding strategies

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### Abstract

**Objective** The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of maternal acculturation level on child feeding strategies and anthropometry in preschoolers from low-income Mexican-American families.

**Design/Subjects** Data are from a cross-sectional survey of 238 low-income Mexican-American families with preschool children living in California during 1998. Interviewers collected data from the mothers on child-feeding practices and weighed and measured the children in their homes.

**Statistical Analyses** Spearman's correlation coefficients, analysis of variance, and  $t^2$  were used to examine the relationship of maternal acculturation level with feeding strategies and anthropometric measurements.

Results Compared with more acculturated mothers, less acculturated mothers tend to offer alternative foods more often when their children refuse to eat. More acculturated women are less likely to view bribes, threats, and punishments as effective strategies and are more likely to give vitamins than less acculturated mothers. Maternal acculturation is not associated with differences in weight-for height z-scores, height-for-age, or body mass index of the children. Triceps skinfold thickness are larger in children of more acculturated mothers than in children of less acculturated women.

Applications/Conclusions Dietitians should consider differences in child feeding practices due to acculturation among Mexican-Americans. Successful strategies to encourage consumption of nutritious traditional foods and to transition from child-led snacking to more structured meals should be part of nutrition education programs. *J Am Diet Assoc*, 2001;101: 542-547.



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