

Institutionen för kost- och idrottsvetenskap

# Television and food in the lives of young children

av

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## Abstract

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Several mechanisms have been proposed behind the associations between screens and overweight including sedentary behaviour, eating while viewing, and exposure to commercials. Aspects of this association as underlying social factors and the possible confounding factors of social norms in the family that can affect children's lifestyle have received less attention. TV commercials for food and beverages have been extensively studied and it is important to study the appearance of food in children's TV programmes in a similar way. The general aim of this thesis is to examine the associations between young children's screen habits, food habits and anthropometry as well as to analyse food and beverages in children's television programmes in public service television in Sweden. Data from the European research project Identification and prevention of dietary and lifestyle-induced health effects in children and infants (IDEFICS) has been used in Papers I-III and 25 hours of children's TV programmes have been analysed for Paper IV.

The main findings indicate that children's TV viewing and total screen time was found to be associated with their increased sweet drink consumption, BMI and waist to height ratio, according to cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses. The association between TV viewing and sweetened beverage consumption was found to be independent of parental norms regarding sweetened beverages. Exposure to commercial TV was associated with consuming sweetened beverages more frequently independently of TV viewing time. One in five foods appearing in the sample of children's TV programmes was for high-calorie and low-nutrient foods, often appearing with children. The results indicate that it is possible to affect children's food habits by influencing their TV habits, and that public service television has the potential to improve the way food and eating are depicted in children's TV programmes.