



Part-time mums win Children are healthier

**Clair Weaver
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MOTHERS who work part-time raise the healthiest children, while stay-at-home mums are more likely to have kids who are chubby couch potatoes, research reveals.

A new study of more than 4500 Australian preschoolers found children of part-time mums ate less junk food, watched less TV and were less likely to be overweight.

The results have sparked renewed calls for family-friendly work policies to promote healthy lifestyles for kids.

Researchers from the University of New England in NSW believe the unexpected finding may be driven by part-time mums being more conscientious on the days they are at home to care for their children.

This could explain why they restrict TV viewing and unhealthy snacks more than other mums, while ensuring their children are active.

"It wasn't what we expected at all," said co-author Jan Nicholson, principal research fellow at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute in

Melbourne.

"When mothers work part time, there's obviously something about the way the house is run and the way parents are looking after their children that is protective," Professor Nicholson said.

The study, to be published in the international journal *Social Sciences & Medicine* next month, also shows full-time working mums tend to have less healthy children.

Overall, part-time mums let their children watch about an hour less TV per week than other mums. The children also

ate fewer snack foods, had more time to exercise and were exposed to less junk food advertising.

Mother-of-two Louisa Curtain said that as a part-time mum, every moment spent with her children was special.

"You want every available minute to be high quality," she said.

The Sherwood mum recently returned to work three days a week as an events manager, after almost five years at home looking after Isabella, 4, and Jack, 3.



QUALITY TIME: Louisa Curtain with her children Jack, 3, and Isabella, 4. Picture: Campbell Scott