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Research Interests:

- Prevention of overweight/obesity in young children
- Infant/toddler feeding behaviors
- Nutrition education aimed at toddlers
- Mealtime interaction
- Maternal feeding practices

Ten million children under age 18 years in the United States are overweight, contributing to annual costs of \$117 billion in obesity-related issues, and placing children at higher risk for immediate and long term adverse health effects. Studies have shown that a proportion of children as young as two years are already overweight.

The World Health Organization (WHO) predicts that by 2015 approximately 2.3 billion adults will be overweight, and more than 700 million will be obese. The Institute of Medicine and Healthy People 2020 identify childhood obesity as a serious nationwide health problem requiring urgent attention.

Poor child feeding practices contribute to obesity risk because of interference with child feeding self-regulation and appropriate growth patterns. Because childhood obesity often persists into adulthood, the obesity epidemic constitutes a substantial decrease in quality of life and life expectancy, accounting for billions of dollars in healthcare spending. In Michigan, 30.6% of children are either obese or overweight.

To help address these health concerns, Dr. Horodynski is currently working on two different federally-funded intervention studies.

1. An intervention for economically and educationally disadvantaged mother-infant dyads that is effective in helping first-time mothers develop infant-centered feeding through appropriate responsiveness, feeding style and feeding practices with their infants to reduce the risk of obesity.
2. An evidence-based obesity prevention behaviors intervention for preschool-aged children and their parents designed to provide developmentally appropriate, empirically-validated and coordinated obesity prevention messages.

The long-term goal of her program of research is to reduce the risk for childhood obesity through theory-based, relationship-skill building infant feeding education and intervention programs for infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children and their families. 🌟