

Antecedents of picky eating behaviour in young children

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Conflicts of interest

- This analysis was funded by Nestlé Nutrition; Nicholas P. Hays is an employee of Nestlé Nutrition
- Caroline Taylor and Pauline Emmett declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Picky eating: Defining the phenotype

Picky eating characterised by unwillingness to try new foods or to eat familiar foods, and strong food preferences⁽¹⁾

¹Dovey et al. *Appetite* 2005;50:181-193



Parental concern about picky eating



- Parents cite picky eating as problematic ⁽²⁾
- Studies from Generation R
 - Parents can be anxious or depressed ⁽³⁾
 - Picky eaters at 4 years at higher risk of underweight at 6 years old ⁽⁴⁾
- Why do some children become picky eaters?

²Wright CM, Parkinson KN, Shipton D, et al. *Pediatrics* 2007;120:e1069–75. ³de Barse LM, et al. *Arch Dis Child* 2016;101:533–538

⁴de Barse et al. *Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act* 2015;12:153

Aims of the study

To **investigate antecedents** of picky eating behaviour identified at 3 years of age:

Assessing

- background & pregnancy
- early feeding practices
- previous pickiness
- maternal worries



Methods



- Data from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC)

Picky eating at 38 months in singletons (n=5701)

Diagnostic question to parents:

Does your child have definite likes and dislikes as far as food is concerned?

No/Yes, quite choosy/Yes, very choosy

No=Non-picky (44.0%) Yes, very choosy=Picky eaters (15.4%)

Methods: Parental-completion questionnaires

- Background & Pregnancy
 - Maternal age, education, parity
 - Child sex, birthweight
 - Anxiety, depression, dietary pattern, BMI
- About child at 6 months of age
 - Feeding difficulties, food refusal, breast feeding duration
- About child at 15 months of age
 - Food refusal, choosiness
 - Age introduced to chewy foods, types of meals/foods
 - Maternal worries, eating with child

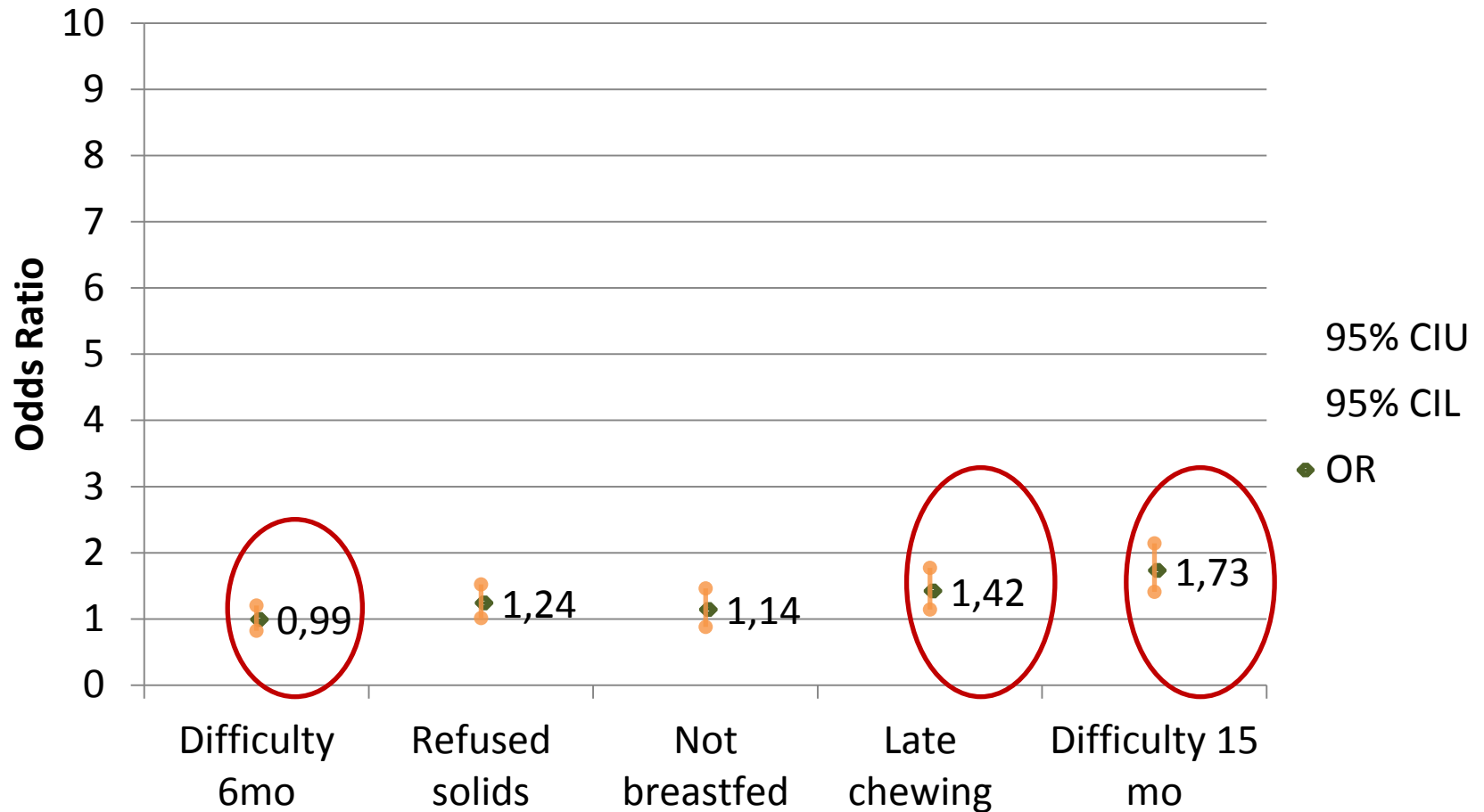
Methods - continued



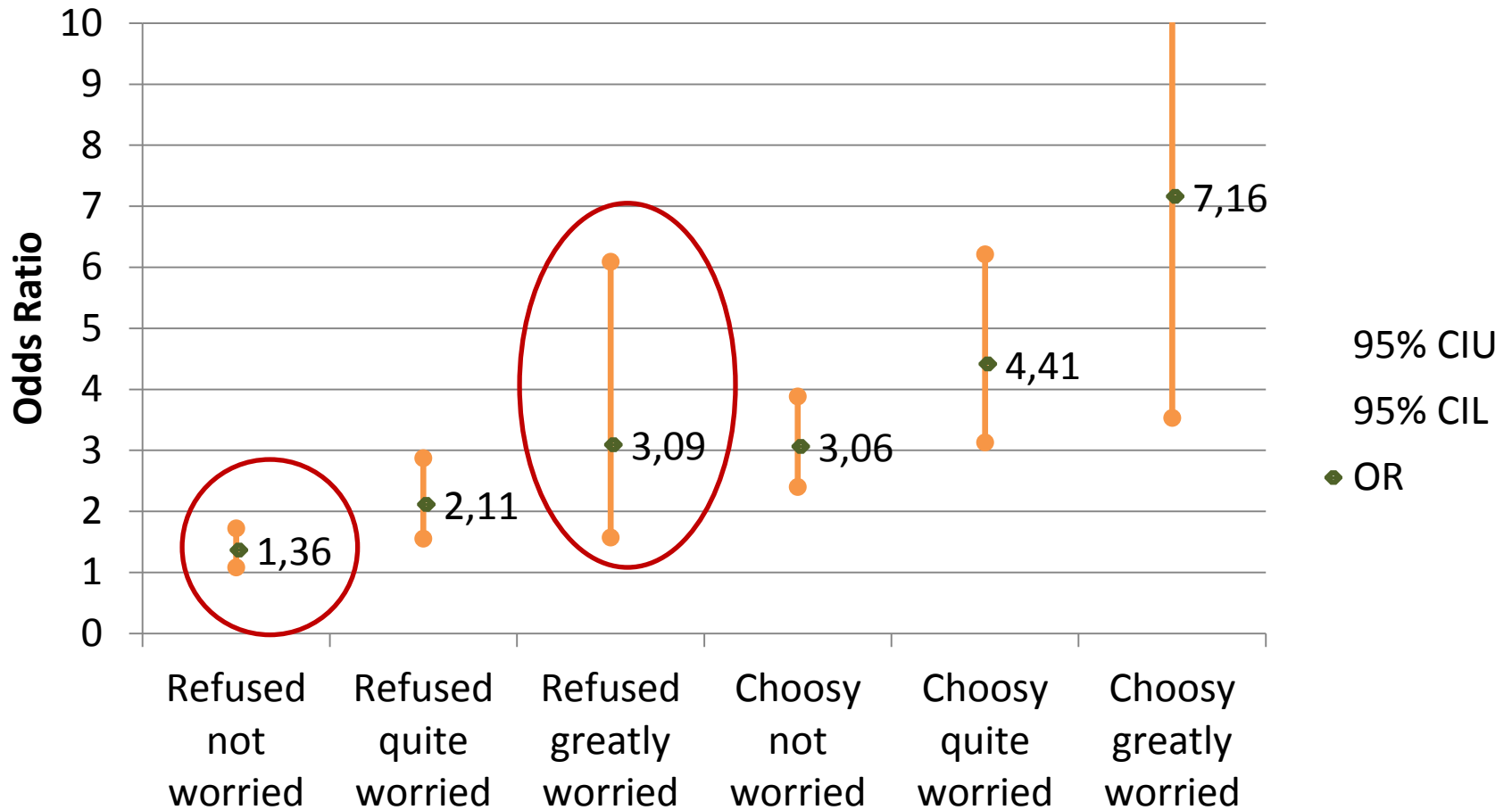
Regression analysis:

- Outcome = **picky eating status at 38 months of age**
 - Analysis adjusted for sex of child, parity, birthweight, maternal age and education
- Variables added in groups
 - Pregnancy; 6 months of age; 15 months of age
 - Final model included **only** significant variables from each group $p < 0.05$

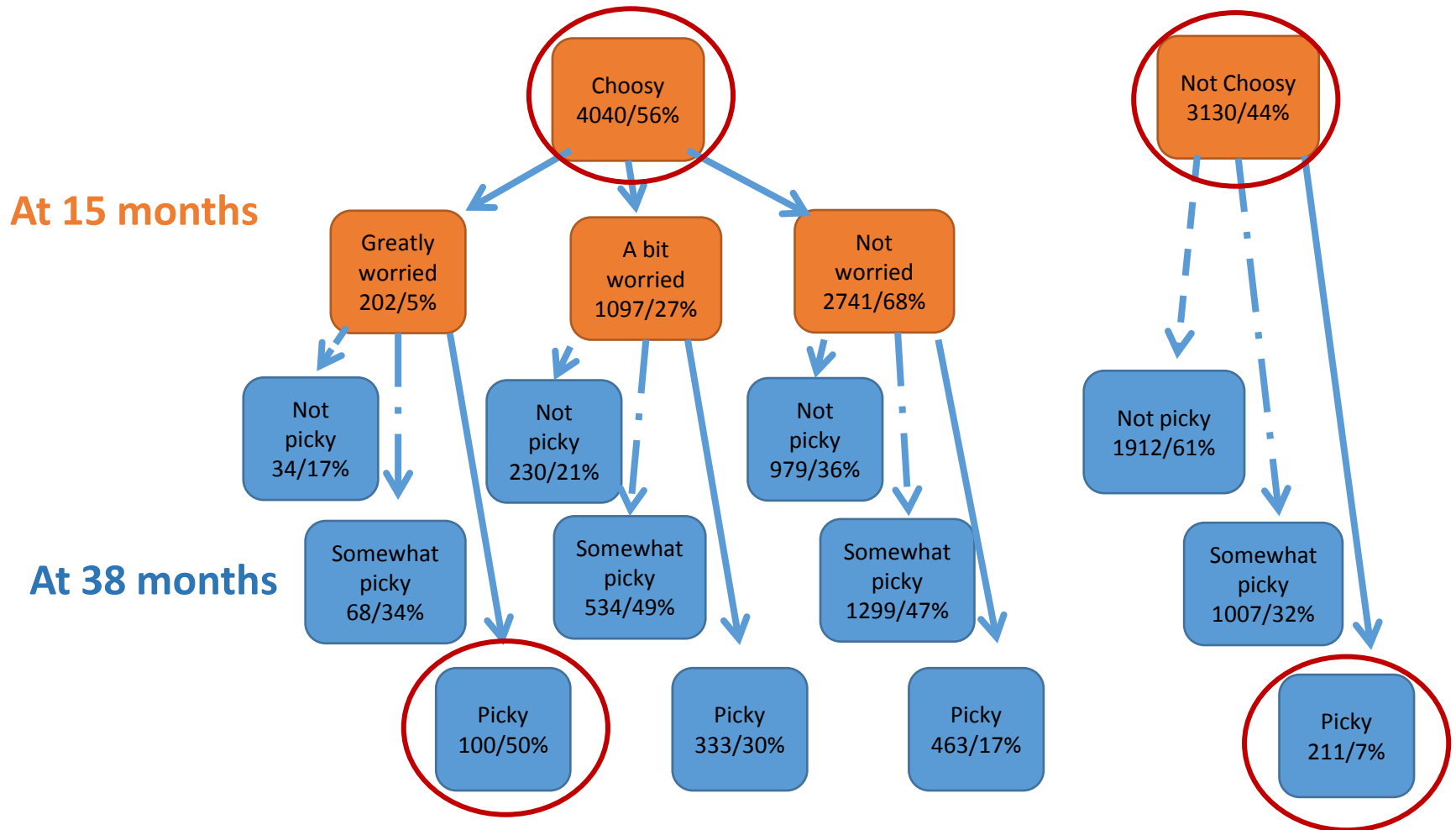
Early feeding antecedents



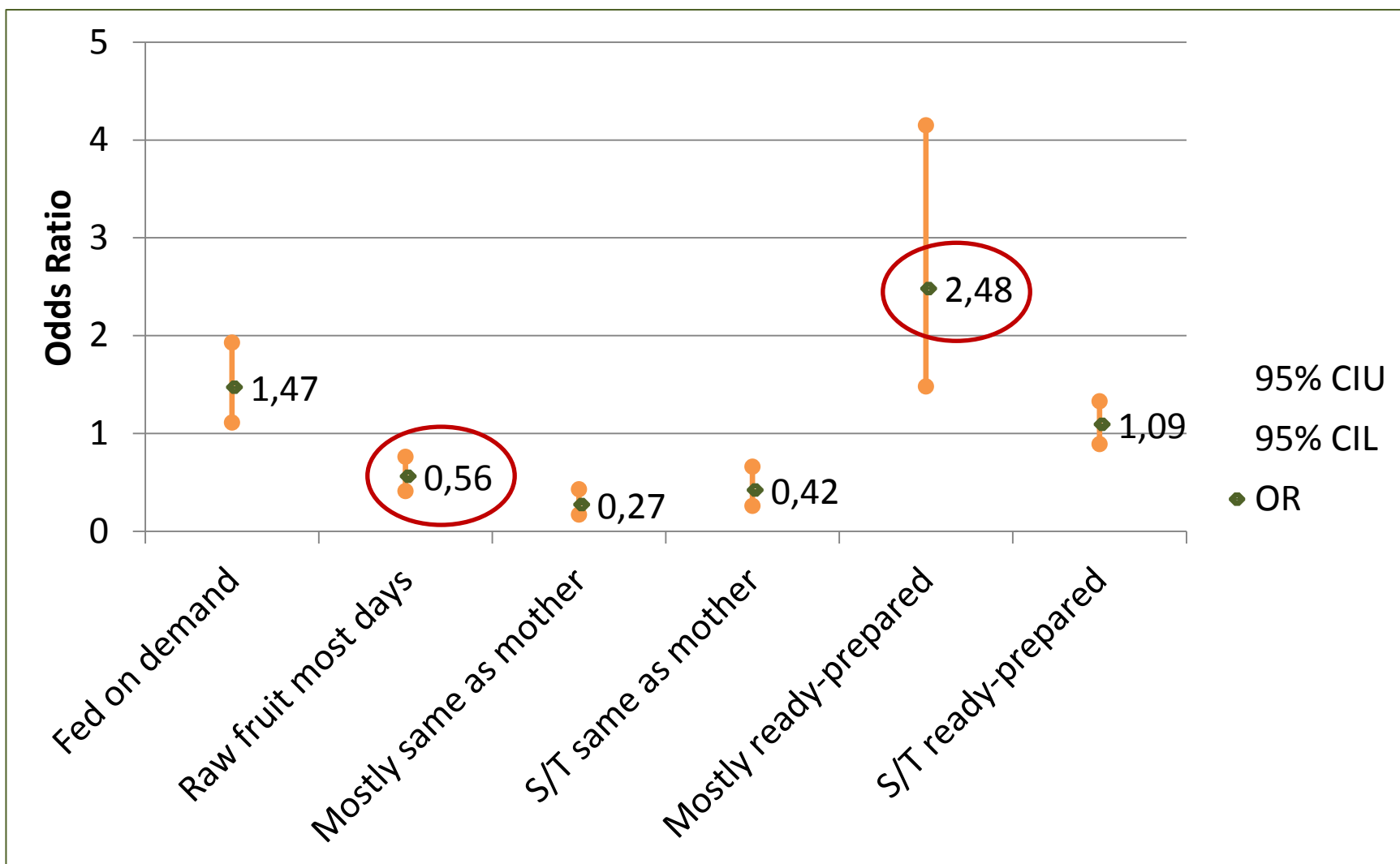
Antecedents at 15 months (1)



How does early choosiness relate to later picky eating?



Antecedents at 15 months (2)



Associations with being picky at 38 months



- Pregnancy variables and breast feeding **not** independently related
- **Late** introduction of lumps (10 mo onwards) **increased** likelihood
- **Any difficulty** with feeding at 15 mo increased likelihood
- Always **fed on demand** at 15 mo increased likelihood

Associations of feeding practices at 15 mo with being a picky eater at 38 mo

- Child **refusing food and being choosy** both strongly increased likelihood
- Mother being **worried** about these behaviors increased likelihood even more
- Child having the **same meal** as the mother or eating **fresh fruit** often both associated with decreased likelihood
- Child always given **ready-prepared foods** increased likelihood

Conclusions

- Providing support to parents of toddlers could be effective in averting picky eating
 - Aim to **allay** parental **concerns** about feeding
 - Encourage use of **fresh foods** particularly fruit
 - Encourage providing **regular meal times** with **same foods** as parents

Thank you for listening

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