Patterns formed in the earliest months of existence can shape the taste preferences of a lifetime.

It is generally accepted that the consumption of sugar-sweetened products increases the risk of NCD (non-communicable diseases).

Early sensory experiences influence these patterns. Consumption of a healthy diet by a mother increases the likelihood that her child will prefer the same healthy foods.

Influencing flavour perception and preference in infants for long-term health

MOTHER’S HEALTHY DIET

- Breast milk
- Umbilical cord and amniotic fluid
- Baby with well-rounded taste preferences

MOTHER’S POOR DIET

- Formula milk
- Umbilical cord and amniotic fluid
- Baby with restricted taste preferences

Relationship between infant nutrition and health in later life

Preference for healthier foods. Likely to have a healthy life.

Preference for sweeter foods. Less likely to have a healthy life.

Predisposition to prefer sweet over bitter-tasting foods

DRAWN TO SWEET FLAVOURS

REPELLED BY BITTER FLAVOURS

Speed of food preference formation and complementary feeding

Influence from taste experience

Preference can take up to ten taste experiences

Influence from advertising

Preference can occur after just one exposure to advertisement

A preference for healthy foods can be encouraged by early exposure to their flavours, although the influence of advertisements for sweet foods needs to be strongly counteracted in the home.