**Methods:** Data came from the 2017/18 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey in Flanders (Belgium). The sample included representative data from 8,702 adolescents in 165 schools. Social factors at individual-level (family meals, family, peer, student and teacher support) and at contextual-level (school culture of student and teacher support and school-level socioeconomic status [SES]) were considered. Multilevel logistic regression analyses were performed.

**Results:** At individual-level, family meals and family and student support were positively associated with fruit and vegetable consumption, family meals with sweet consumption too. Student and teacher support showed positive associations solely with fruit consumption. At contextual-level, adolescents attending schools with a lower school-SES demonstrated lower vegetable consumption. Culture of teacher support was negatively associated with sweets but also vegetable consumption. For culture of student support no associations were found.

**Conclusions:** The study mainly provide cues for strengthening family social ties as dietary health promotion initiatives, with some evidence supporting the role of beneficial peer and school social factors. Mixed results for contextual school-level social factors warrant further research to identify additional school-related influences on adolescent dietary behaviours to advance current understandings.

**Key messages:**

- Family meals and support promote healthy eating in adolescents, emphasising the health promoting role of family social ties in dietary habits.
- Mixed findings on school-level social factors call for more research on school health policies.



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## Unlocking adolescent dietary behaviours: the causal role of social contexts

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**Background:** Using a causal inference framework, our study aimed to extend previous work in providing a comprehensive understanding of the role various social contexts across different levels can play in predicting adolescent dietary behaviours.