

### Introduction

- Obese children are likely to:
  - stay obese into adulthood
  - develop diabetes and heart disease
  - have shorter life expectancies



- To promote healthy eating habits in children, an understanding of their perceptions of food is key.

### Purpose

- To identify preschooler's perceptions of foods, which may aid health professionals/educators in designing developmentally appropriate interventions to prevent and reduce childhood obesity.

### Research Questions

- 1) Which foods do preschooler's like/dislike?
- 2) Which foods do preschooler's perceive as healthy/unhealthy?
- 3) How are preschooler's likes/dislikes related to their perceptions of foods as healthy or unhealthy?

### Preschool Food Perceptions Measurement Tool (PFPMT)<sup>TM</sup>



- Developed by the researcher to serve as a quantitative measurement tool for this study
- 6 Healthy items (broccoli, apple, milk, banana, corn, and water)
- 5 Unhealthy items (pizza, hot dog, soda, french fries, and cookie)

- Taste Preference Section
  - "yummy" or "yucky"



- Healthfulness Section
  - "good for me" or "bad for me"



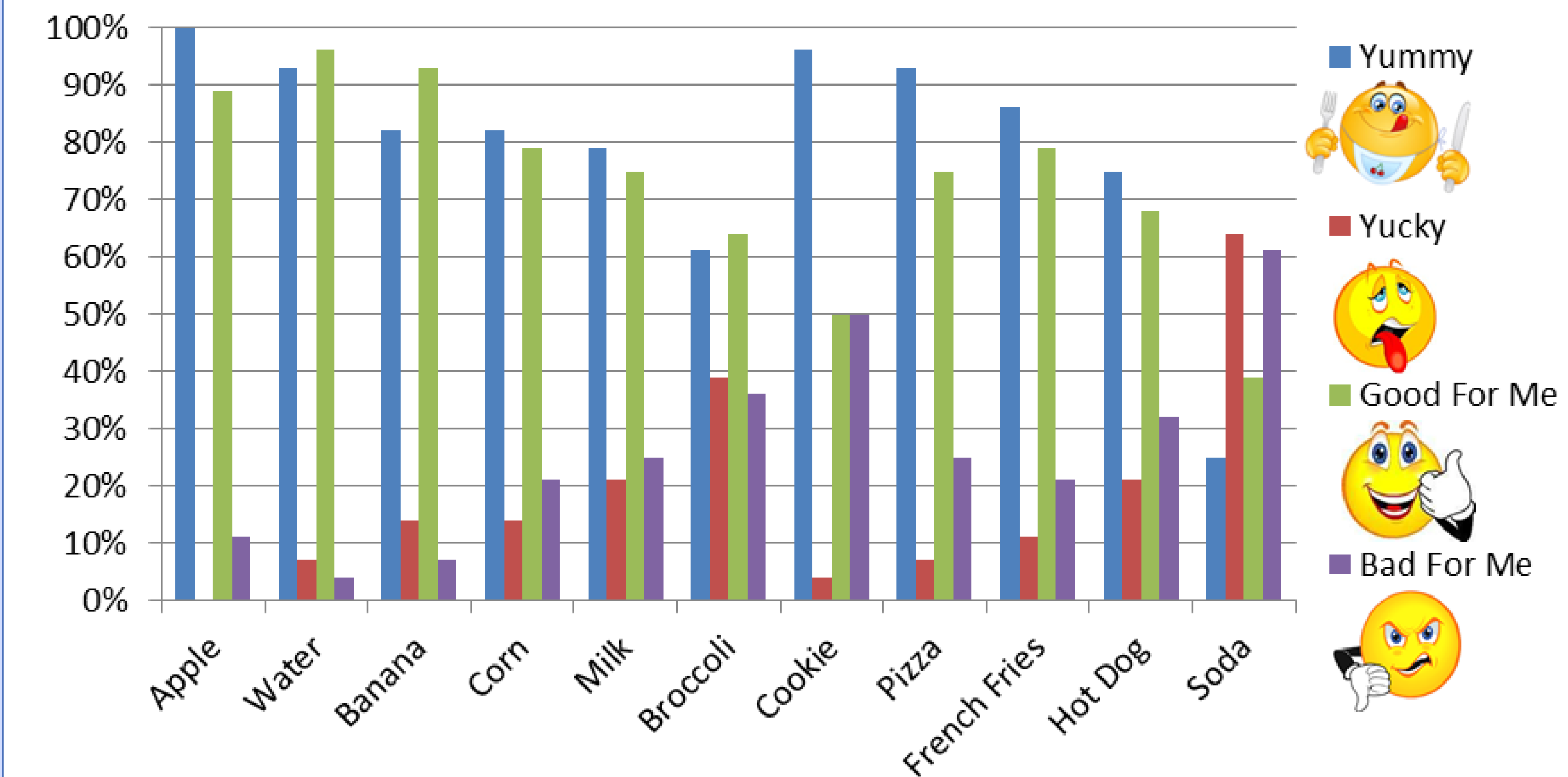
### Methodology

- Comparative, descriptive design
- Setting:
  - 2 Preschools (14 children from each ) in Madison County, Alabama.
- Sample
  - 28 Preschoolers (14 girls, 14 boys)
  - Age 4–5 years (4 YO = 16, 5 YO =12)

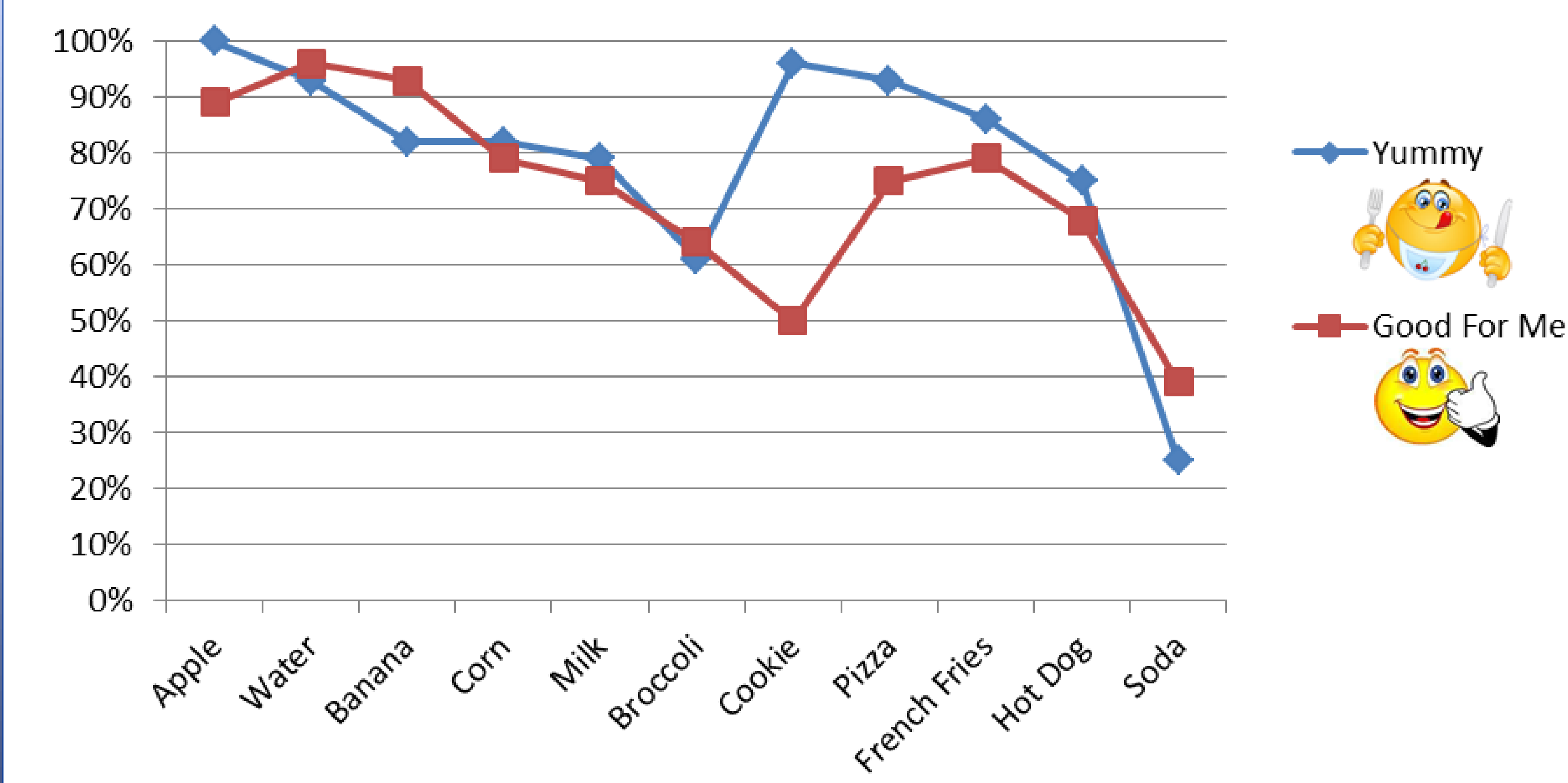


### Findings

Preschooler's Food Perceptions



Yummy & Good For Me Association



### Results

- Chi Square ( $X^2$ ) scores showed:
  - Sig ( $p=.004$ ) for relationship between taste preference and healthfulness of broccoli
  - Sig ( $p=.03$ ) for relationship between taste preference and healthfulness of milk
  - Not Sig ( $p=.09$ ) for relationship between taste preference and healthfulness of pizza
- Additional  $X^2$  scores did not show significant findings

### Discussion

- Majority of preschoolers responded "yummy" to all food items (except soda)
- Majority of preschoolers responded "good for me" to all food items (except soda and cookie)
- $X^2$  scores showed a significant association between taste preference and healthfulness of broccoli and milk and not significant association of pizza

### Implications

- Use of the PFPMT<sup>TM</sup>
  - Routine doctor's office visits
  - School settings
- Association between taste preference and healthfulness should be considered when educating preschoolers on nutrition.
- Further research needs to be conducted using larger samples to obtain more conclusive results regarding the relationship between preschooler's perception of food item healthfulness and taste preference.

