This transdisciplinary project will provide unique insights into how individual biology interacts with the family environment to promote healthy eating habits in young children. It is one of the first studies to take a longitudinal look at the habits, including milk and dairy consumption, from birth.

The study sample includes 451 infants and their families located in small urban communities in central Illinois. Biological samples and height and weight measurements from infants and toddlers are collected at 6 weeks, 3, 12, 18, 24, and 36 months, 4 and 5 years. Mothers are surveyed about weaning, dietary habits, household routines, children’s emotions, feeding styles, and milk and dairy consumption. Additional measures such as maternal height and weight are also being collected.

The project is part of the larger STRONG Kids Program based at the Family Resiliency Center and housed in Doris Kelley Christopher Hall. STRONG Kids 2 is built upon previous research with preschool-aged children, documenting the relationship among genetic, child, and family factors in predicting BMI and dietary habits.

This research was funded by grants from the National Dairy Council to Sharon Donovan and Barbara H. Fiese (CoPI’s), the Gerber Foundation to Sharon Donovan, the Christopher Family Foundation to Sharon Donovan and Kelly K. Bost, Hatch ILLU 793-330 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to Barbara H. Fiese, Kelly K. Bost and Margarita Teran-Garcia, and the National Institutes of Health DK107561 to Sharon Donovan.