

Ta'am Mustadam intervention to promote sustainable food choices

Submission date 11/10/2025	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	☐ Prospectively registered ☐ Protocol
Registration date 21/10/2025	Overall study status Completed	☐ Statistical analysis plan ☐ Results
Last Edited 26/01/2026	Condition category Other	☐ Individual participant data ☒ Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Suboptimal diets are a leading cause of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and early deaths in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Conditions such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease are highly prevalent, with obesity rates rising sharply in recent decades. At the same time, the UAE faces environmental challenges like water scarcity, poor soil quality, and heavy reliance on food imports, which threaten food security and sustainability. To tackle these issues, national initiatives such as the UAE Food Security Strategy 2051 and the National Action Plan in Nutrition aim to improve both health and environmental resilience. Promoting sustainable diets—those that support health while minimizing environmental impact—is a key strategy. The EAT-Lancet Commission’s “planetary health diet” exemplifies this approach, emphasizing more plant-based foods and less meat. However, many existing interventions lack strong theoretical foundations. This study uses the Behavior Change Wheel (BCW) and COM-B model to design an evidence-based intervention that encourages sustainable food choices. It also applies the RE-AIM framework to assess the intervention’s reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation, and maintenance, helping to determine its real-world impact and long-term potential to support healthier and more sustainable eating in the UAE.

Who can participate?
Undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU).

What does the study involve?
Participants will take part in a 6-week program, followed by a 4-week follow-up period. The program will be delivered through a WhatsApp group, where participants will receive short educational messages, interactive video recipes, and daily reminders at their main mealtime to encourage sustainable food choices. In addition, participants will join hands-on activities held at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences. To help evaluate the program’s impact, participants will complete questionnaires before the program starts, right after it ends, and one month later.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The program could help participants make healthier and more sustainable food choices and

contribute to improving future public health programs in the UAE. On the other hand, the present study poses no risk to participants in any form, either physical or psychological.

Where is the study run from?

The College of Medicine and Health Sciences (CMHS) at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) in the UAE.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

May 2025 to January 2026. The study will start enrolling in September 2025 and run for six weeks, ending at the end of November. It will be followed by a one-month follow-up period.

Who is funding the study?

This research was supported by ASPIRE, the technology program management pillar of Abu Dhabi's Advanced Technology Research Council (ATRC), via the ASPIRE VRI (Virtual Research Institute) Award.

Who is the main contact?

Prof. Carine Platat, PhD, platatcarine@uaeu.ac.ae

Contact information

Type(s)

Scientific, Principal investigator

Contact name

Prof Carine Platat

ORCID ID

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8704-6372>

Contact details

Department of Nutrition and Health, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, P.O. Box No. 15551

Al Ain

United Arab Emirates

-

+971501123017

platatcarine@uaeu.ac.ae

Type(s)

Public

Contact name

Miss Souzan Zidan

ORCID ID

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7802-8666>

Contact details

Department of Nutrition and Health, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, P.O. Box No. 15551

Al Ain
United Arab Emirates
0000
+971506589584
700039573@uaeu.ac.ae

Additional identifiers

ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)
NCT07042412

Study information

Scientific Title

Ta'am Mustadam intervention: promoting sustainable food choices among young adults in the UAEU community

Study objectives

Primary Objectives:

- To evaluate whether the intervention promotes sustainable food choices — specifically greater consumption of fruits and vegetables, plant-based foods (e.g., legumes & nuts), and reduced intake of red and processed meats—at post-intervention and 4-week follow-up.
- To assess changes in food choice motives at post-intervention and 4-week follow-up.

Secondary Objectives:

- To examine improvements in knowledge, intentions, and practices related to sustainable diets at post-intervention and 4-week follow-up.
- To assess changes in energy and nutrient intakes at post-intervention and 4-week follow-up.
- To evaluate the intervention's real-world impact using the RE-AIM framework.

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

Approved 19/05/2025, Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Research and Sponsored Projects Office, United Arab Emirates University, P.O. Box: 15551, Al Ain, -, United Arab Emirates; +971 3 713 6597; research.office@uaeu.ac.ae), ref: ERSC_2025_6704

Primary study design

Interventional

Study design

Quasi-experimental pre-post design with a 4-week follow-up

Study type(s)

Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Promoting sustainable food choices among young adults

Interventions

This 6-week pilot intervention will use a quasi-experimental pre-post design with a 4-week follow-up, targeting 80 participants at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences (CMHS). The intervention focuses on increasing the consumption of fruits, vegetables, and plant-based foods (e.g., legumes & nuts), and reducing the consumption of red/processed meat.

The Ta'am Mustadam intervention, guided by the BCW and BCT, will consist of the following elements:

1. **Education:** In the mornings at 9:00 AM, educational messages will be shared via WhatsApp twice weekly (Tuesdays and Fridays), dietary tips on Wednesdays, and video recipes on Saturdays. Additionally, the Planetary Health Plate will be printed on a retractable banner and placed outside the entrance of the CMHS canteen.
2. **Behavioral Practice:** This component engages participants with sustainable eating habits through biweekly cooking competitions and hands-on snack preparation activities held on Thursdays.
3. **Environmental restructuring:** Daily reminders and nudges will be delivered through WhatsApp messages, timed before participants' main meals, to promote the consumption of sustainable food choices.

Ta'am Mustadam intervention will be evaluated using the RE-AIM framework.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

1. Adoption of sustainable food choices assessed by dietary intake. Dietary intake will be measured through a validated English version of the Food Frequency Questionnaire (FFQ) tailored for the UAE population at pre-intervention (1 week before the start of the intervention period), post-intervention (at the end of the 6-week intervention period), and follow-up (4 weeks after the intervention end)
2. The extent of changes in food choice motives. Food choice motives will be measured using the Food Choice Questionnaire tailored for Arabic-speaking countries at pre-intervention (1 week before the start of the intervention period), post-intervention (at the end of the 6-week intervention period), and follow-up (4 weeks after the intervention end)

Key secondary outcome(s)

The following secondary outcome measures will be assessed at pre-intervention (1 week before the start of the intervention period), post-intervention (at the end of the 6-week intervention period), and follow-up (4 weeks after the intervention end), unless stated:

1. Changes in knowledge towards sustainable diets will be measured through participants' agreement with five statements adapted from a validated questionnaire
2. Changes in behavioral intentions towards sustainable diets will be measured based on participants' intent to adopt more sustainable behaviors, using an adapted questionnaire
4. Changes in self-reported behaviors towards sustainable diets will be measured by participants' weekly consumption of 6 food groups (e.g., "How often do you consumed fruits in a typical week") using five intake frequencies ("0 times", "1–2 times", "3–4 times", "5–6 times",

“seven or more times”)

5. Changes in baseline energy and nutrient intake will be measured through a validated English version of the Food Frequency Questionnaire (FFQ) tailored for the UAE population

6. The implementation of the Ta'am Mustadam intervention at the participant level will be measured using an evaluation form. This questionnaire contains yes/ no questions, Likert-scale questions, and an open-ended question to collect detailed feedback from participants at post-intervention (at the end of the 6-week intervention period)

Completion date

31/01/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

Students (both undergraduates & postgraduates) at CMHS

Participant type(s)

Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Mixed

Lower age limit

18 Years

Upper age limit

110 Years

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

80

Key exclusion criteria

Not signing the informed consent

Reporting history of food allergies or any food intolerances (e.g., celiac disease, lactose intolerance, nut allergy, etc.)

Reporting any medical condition that might directly affect eating patterns (e.g., Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, Crohn's disease, Irritable bowel syndrome)

Under medication that affect eating patterns

Being pregnant or breastfeeding

Following a vegan or vegetarian diet

Date of first enrolment

01/09/2025

Date of final enrolment

13/10/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Arab Emirates

Study participating centre**College of Medicine and Health Sciences**

Al-Ain, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 15551

Al-Ain

United Arab Emirates

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Sponsor information

Organisation

United Arab Emirates University

ROR

<https://ror.org/01km6p862>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Research organisation

Funder Name

ASPIRE

Alternative Name(s)**Funding Body Type**

Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype

Research institutes and centers

Location

United Arab Emirates

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study will be available upon request from Prof. Carine Platat, platatcarine@uaeu.ac.ae.

- Type of data: De-identified participant data, including demographics, food choice motives, knowledge, intentions, practices, behaviors toward sustainable diets, and dietary intake (FFQ).
- Timing: The anonymized dataset will be made available upon reasonable request approximately 12 months after publication of the primary study findings and will remain accessible for 5 years thereafter.
- Consent: All participants will provide written informed consent, including permission for the use and potential sharing of their anonymized data for academic research purposes
- Anonymization: All personal identifiers (university email address) will be removed. Each participant will be assigned a unique study code to ensure confidentiality.
- Restrictions: Data sharing will comply with the UAEU Human Research Ethics Committee approval (ERSC_2025_6704). All data access requests will be reviewed and approved by the Principal Investigator (Prof. Carine Platat), following UAEU’s data protection and confidentiality policies.
- Additional comments: Researchers requesting data must sign a data-sharing agreement to ensure use solely for non-commercial, academic purposes. Shared datasets must not be redistributed to third parties, and secondary analyses should acknowledge the original study.

IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Participant information sheet			21/10/2025	No	Yes