

Impact of increasing the availability of healthier vs. less healthy food on food selection: a laboratory experiment

Submission date 04/05/2018	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	☐ Prospectively registered
		☐ Protocol
Registration date 11/06/2018	Overall study status Completed	☐ Statistical analysis plan
		☒ Results
Last Edited 02/02/2021	Condition category Nutritional, Metabolic, Endocrine	☐ Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Our environments shape our behaviour, however little research has assessed whether healthier food cues have a similar impact to less healthy ones. Findings from a recent online study indicated that increasing the number of less healthy snack foods available may have a larger impact on food selection than increasing healthier foods. The aim of this study is to examine whether the availability of healthier vs. less healthy food alters the likelihood of selecting a healthier or less healthy snack for immediate consumption, and to determine if food selection is affected by individuals' socioeconomic status, response inhibition and food appeal.

Who can participate?

Adults over the age of 18 who are able to attend a face-to-face study session in Cambridge, UK

What does the study involve?

Participants are randomly allocated to one of three groups (which vary in terms of the number of healthier vs less healthy foods they are offered). Participants in each group are offered a selection of snack foods, with the available snacks comprising a mix of healthier and less healthy snacks. Participants are asked to select one snack and are asked to consume the entire snack. Participants are also asked to complete measures of response inhibition and food appeal on a laptop at the start of a study, and questions measuring demographic variables after consuming the snacks.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Participants will be paid £30 for participating in this study. There are no known risks of participating in the study.

Where is the study run from?

Behaviour and Health Research Unit, University of Cambridge (UK)

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

February 2018 to December 2019

Who is funding the study?

1. Wellcome Trust (UK)
2. National Institute for Health Research Policy Research Programme (UK)

Who is the main contact?

Dr Rachel Pechey

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Contact information

Type(s)

Scientific

Contact name

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number

RG77630

Study information

Scientific Title

Impact of increasing the availability of healthier vs. less healthy food on food selection: a laboratory experiment

Study objectives

1. Increasing the number of less healthy food items will have a larger effect on food selection than increasing the number of healthier food items
- 2.1. Participants with higher socioeconomic status will be more likely to choose healthier foods after seeing a greater number of healthier food options than those with lower socioeconomic status
- 2.2. Participants with higher socioeconomic status will be less likely to choose less healthy foods after seeing a greater number of less healthy food options than those with lower socioeconomic status

status

3. Response inhibition and food appeal will both partially mediate the impact of socioeconomic status on food selection

Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee, 28/03/2018, ref: Pre.2018.025

Primary study design

Interventional

Study design

Single-centre three-group between-subjects design

Study type(s)

Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Unhealthy diet

Interventions

Participants are randomly allocated into three groups, which vary in terms of the mix of healthier and less healthy foods offered:

Group 1: Snack selection contains 2 healthier and 2 less healthy foods.

Group 2: Snack selection contains 6 healthier and 2 less healthy foods.

Group 3: Snack selection contains 2 healthier and 6 less healthy foods.

Participants are told they will be taking part in a study investigating the effect of snacking on performance in cognitive tasks so that snack food can be consumed without making participants aware that the study is about snack selection (awareness of this may affect their snack selection). Participants are fully debriefed at the end of the session.

Participants are asked to select one snack and will be asked to consume the entire snack. Participants are also asked to complete implicit measures of response inhibition and food appeal on a laptop at the start of a study, and questions measuring demographic variables after consuming the snacks.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

Selection of healthier or less healthy snack item from the available array

Key secondary outcome(s)

N/A

Completion date

31/12/2019

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Adults aged over 18 years
2. Participants currently residing within the UK and able to attend a face-to-face study session in Cambridge

Participant type(s)

Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Adult

Lower age limit

18 Years

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

417

Key exclusion criteria

Any food allergies or intolerances

Date of first enrolment

26/04/2018

Date of final enrolment

30/11/2018

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre

Behaviour and Health Research Unit

University of Cambridge
Institute of Public Health
Cambridge
United Kingdom
CB2 0SR

Sponsor information

Organisation

University of Cambridge (UK)

ROR

<https://ror.org/013meh722>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Research organisation

Funder Name

Wellcome Trust

Alternative Name(s)

Funding Body Type

Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype

International organizations

Location

United Kingdom

Funder Name

National Institute for Health Research

Alternative Name(s)

National Institute for Health Research, NIHR Research, NIHRresearch, NIHR - National Institute for Health Research, NIHR (The National Institute for Health and Care Research), NIHR

Funding Body Type

Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype

National government

Location

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The data sharing plans for the current study are unknown and will be made available at a later date.

IPD sharing plan summary

Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article	results	01/02/2021	02/02/2021	Yes	No