

Too much TV linked to future fast-food intake

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High-school kids who watch too much TV are likely to have bad eating habits five years in the future. Research published in BioMed Central's open access *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* followed almost 2000 high- and middle-school children and found that TV viewing times predict a poor diet in the future.

Dr Daheia Barr-Anderson worked with a team of researchers from the University of Minnesota to investigate the relationship between television and diet. She said, "To our knowledge, this is the first study to examine the association between television viewing and diet over the transition from adolescence into young adulthood. We've shown that TV viewing during adolescence predicts poorer dietary intake patterns five years later".

Stronger and more consistent patterns were seen during the transition from high school to young adulthood than during the transition from middle school to high school. Both are critical developmental periods, where lifelong behaviours are formed. The authors found that those high-school kids who watched more than five hours of television per day had a lower intake of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and calcium-rich foods; and higher intakes of snack foods, fried foods, fast food, sugar-sweetened beverages, and trans fats five years later.

According to Barr-Anderson, "These less than healthy foodstuffs are commonly advertised on television while healthy foods rarely receive the same publicity. Although young people may be aware that many foods

advertised on television are not healthy, they may chose to ignore or do not fully realize the consequences, because the actors they see advertising and eating the foods in the commercials are usually not overweight".

Barr-Anderson and her colleagues have called for action to tackle television adverts for food and drinks. They say, "The potential negative impacts of advertising and marketing campaigns on dietary quality and purchasing behavior show that, as well as devising interventions to reduce television viewing time, we need to promote healthy food choices, in general and while watching television, to overcome harmful media influences".

Reference: Does television viewing predict dietary intake five years later in high school students and young adults?

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International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity (in press), www.ijbnpa.org/

Source: BioMed Central

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