

The hungry bypass veggies for starches, proteins

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(Medical Xpress) -- After going without food for 18 hours, most of us would rather reach for French fries or chicken fingers than green beans or carrots, according to a new study from Cornell's Food and Brand Lab.

The study, published June 25 in the journal *Archives of Internal Medicine*, found that 75 percent of participants placed on an 18-hour fast started their next meal with a starch or a protein rather than a vegetable, compared with 44 percent of non-fasting participants.

And most of the calories consumed during that meal came from whichever food they ate first -- participants consumed about 47 percent more calories from the first food they ate compared with other foods.

As part of the study, Brian Wansink, the John Dyson Professor of [Consumer Behavior](#) and director of the Cornell Food and Brand Lab, and postdoctoral researchers Aner Tal and Mitsuru Shimizu randomly assigned 128 college students to an 18-hour fast (from 6 p.m. to noon the next day) or no fast.

At lunch after the fast, participants ate from a buffet with their choice of two starches (dinner rolls and [French fries](#)), two proteins (chicken fingers and cheese) and two vegetables ([carrots](#) and green beans). Hidden scales recorded the amount of each food item participants ate, and researchers observed the order in which they were consumed.

In the fasting group, 35 percent of participants began their meal with a

starch, compared with 13 percent of those who did not fast.

Only a quarter of the fasters ate vegetables first, compared with about half of the people in the control group.

"Even relatively mild food deprivation can alter the foods people choose to eat, potentially leading them to eat starches first and most," Tal said.

[Food deprivation](#) is something many people face on different occasions, because of a religious or medical fast, or simply due to the daily hassles of life, which might lead people to skip meals, he noted.

Based on the results of the study, Tal suggests that hospitals encourage fasting patients to first eat lower calorie fruits and vegetables and to make nutrient-rich foods attractive and convenient to guide them toward healthier choices and away from overloading on higher calorie foods.

Similarly, people who miss meals as part of their daily lives should be careful about the foods they are exposed to following a fast.

"Meal skippers should avoid breaking their fast with high-calorie items to reduce the risk of calorie overload," he said.

Provided by Cornell University

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