

Shopping to a list aids weight loss

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Credit: Andrea Piacquadio from Pexels

Planning meals and sticking to a shopping list benefits the waistline, according to new research.

The study, recently published in *Nutrition and Diabetes*, looked at whether pre-commitment strategies such as shopping to a grocery list

were likely to be cost-effective in facilitating healthier diets, [weight loss](#) and ultimately better health among overweight and obese individuals.

Researchers from Monash University's Centre for Health Economics looked at strategies for weight loss from a relatively new discipline, behavioural economics.

Lead researcher, Dr Nicole Au said behavioural economic strategies essentially exploit people's behavioural tendencies and habits to nudge them towards decisions which are healthier and more in line with their long-term goals.

"Recent research suggests that novel strategies drawn from behavioural economics may prove to be much more effective than mainstream approaches (such as information provision) to assist individuals in making healthier [lifestyle choices](#)," Dr Au said.

"And the good thing is some of these behavioural economic strategies can often be carried out at very low costs. Encouraging these strategies in the community could also be a cost-effective policy option for governments."

Dr Au said a predetermined grocery list committed shoppers to buy only the foods that were on that list thereby helping them avoid the temptations of [unhealthy food](#) purchases.

"When individuals worked with detailed meal plans and a grocery list to make the meals it could have a meaningful impact on weight loss and long-term health among overweight and [obese individuals](#)," Dr Au said.

"We found because the planning of meals and writing of the shopping list could be carried out relatively cheaply, it was a cost-effective weight-loss tool when compared to the alternative of 'doing nothing'."

The findings were encouraging because they suggest that something as simple as [shopping](#) to a predetermined grocery list is a cost-effective means for reducing obesity and improving quality of life.

"Of course, diet is just one side of the energy equation. I think there is great potential for behavioural economic strategies to improve physical activity as well as diet, and future work is needed to investigate whether such strategies are cost-effective," Dr Au said.

Many consumers know all too well that overeating and under-exercising will lead to weight gain and increased risk of chronic illness. However, in many cases impulsiveness or poor self-control leads people to behave in a manner that departs from their good intentions.

Provided by Monash University

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