

An SMS a day keeps the doctor away

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(Medical Xpress)—Habit-based messages by text message or email have proven to increase the fruit consumption of young adults according to Australian research.

The study by researchers from The University of Western Australia's School of Psychology and School of Sport Science, Exercise, and Health compared the effectiveness of three different types of message content (habit-based messages; food-group messages and general healthy eating messages) via email and text over an eight-week period.

The results, published in the Australian & New Zealand *Journal of Public Health*, show that using messages such as "Eat a piece of fruit for morning tea each day" to focus on habit-forming behaviour, helped to

improve fruit consumption among the 71 undergraduates who took part in the trial.

Vegetable consumption also increased significantly over the intervention period regardless of the message content and the results were the same whether the message was delivered via [email](#) or text.

"What we showed is that messages emphasising repetitive, habitual behaviours were the most effective in improving [fruit consumption](#) in young adults, but simply reminding them to be conscious of their food choices may be enough to improve their overall [vegetable consumption](#)," lead author Christopher Rompotis said.

"While future research could narrow down which messages are most effective, there is enough evidence here to support the use of electronic media as a cost-effective method for instilling better eating habits among young people.

"Previous research had suggested that fruit and vegetable interventions targeting young adults could result in reduced long-term health burdens because eating patterns developed during early adulthood were often maintained in later life," Mr Rompotis said.

"At the same time, interventions targeting this group need to consider the life circumstances and time burdens that [young adults](#) may face (eg socialising, tertiary studies and paid employment) and deliver information in a timely and accessible manner."

Provided by University of Western Australia

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