

Size matters when it comes to children's food choices

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The secret to getting children to eat vegetables could lie in the portion size, a Deakin University study has revealed.

Deakin nutrition expert Dr Gie Liem has found that [children](#) develop a long-term liking for [food](#) that is cut into small pieces.

"Around 90 per cent of children do not eat enough fruit and vegetables," Dr Liem said. "This study indicates that manipulating the size of the food is a possible solution to encouraging children to eat more healthy foods."

In the three-week study, children aged 7-12 were given either small snacks around the size of a sugar cube that had a crispy outer-layer and cream filling or identically flavoured snacks in a bar shape.

"Both snacks were similarly liked at the start of the study, however by the end there was decreased liking for the bar-shaped snack while the small sized snack remained liked," Dr Liem said.

"Due to children's oral development they chew food into smaller particles than adults before they swallow. So it is possible that foods already small in size would require less effort to eat, making them more appealing."

Dr Liem said that the findings were important in understanding children's eating behaviour.

"The results open up new possibilities in developing strategies to encourage children to eat more healthy foods. The aim now is to investigate if small sizes of healthy foods encourage children to [eat](#) in a similar way as was found in this study."

Provided by Deakin University

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