

Jamie's Ministry of Food brings about changes in food attitudes and behaviors

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A study looking at Jamie's Ministry of Food Australia 10-week program has found that it brings not only a change in attitudes but also in behavior when buying healthy food. The research published in the open access journal *BMC Public Health* has found that these changes continue up to six months after completion of the program.

Jamie's Ministry of Food was a campaign started with the aim of encouraging people to develop cooking skills to prepare simple, fresh and [healthy food](#) easily and quickly. It is based on a British initiative during the Second World War, which was started by the government to educate the public about [food](#) and nutrition so they could feed themselves properly with the available rations. Originally initiated in the UK, this new campaign has now been brought to Australia by the philanthropic organization The Good Foundation in conjunction with Jamie Oliver.

The Good Foundation commissioned researchers from Deakin University and the University of Melbourne in Australia to evaluate one of Jamie's of Ministry of Food centers in Ipswich, Queensland. The researchers surveyed participants of the program at three points: at the start of the program, where 694 people responded; 10 weeks later at the end of the program, 383 responses; and six months after it finished where 259 people responded. Participants' responses for the first two points included a [control group](#) - those who were on the waiting list for the program at 10 weeks before it started and as it began.

The results of the study found that over time, the participants in the program decreased their weekly spend on fast food. In the time between starting the program and completion, the participants increased their weekly spend on fruits and vegetables even though their average expenditure did not increase. Compared to the control group, there was also an increase in knowledge of healthy eating on subjects such as sugar and salt intake.

In addition, the researchers interviewed 15 of the participants at the three points of surveying. One participant said six months after completing the program: "I was stuffing the fatty things [in the trolley] and I wouldn't change and try new stuff, which was costing me more money and now I'm trying all these new things, I might spend a bit more on fresh fruit and vegetables than what I used to but.... It's a good thing [it] means we are not buying crap..."

Besides changes in attitudes, the researchers also found an increase in confidence when cooking and in social behaviors. Participants reported that there was an increase in eating meals at the dinner table together as a family, which is associated with improved family relationships. It was also found that some of the participants involved their children more in the food preparation process, which is associated with an increase in consumption of fruit and vegetables.

Lead author, Jessica Herbert from Deakin University, said: "The results of this first evaluation of Jamie's Ministry of Food Australia showed multiple improvements in [participants](#)' food and cooking attitudes, knowledge, food purchasing behaviors and social interactions within the home environment. Most of the results were sustained six months after the program.

"The sustained significant improvements in participant's cooking attitudes, knowledge and behaviors were small, however, together they

contribute to a positive step in the right direction towards [healthy eating](#) behaviors. These results contribute to the limited evidence on the wider impacts of cooking skills interventions."

More information: Wider impacts of a 10-week community cooking skills program - Jamie's Ministry of Food, Australia, *BMC Public Health* , www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/14/1161

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