

Study shows how alcohol effects food consumption

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A researcher from the University's Institute of Psychology, Health and Society has published a paper in *Health Psychology* about the adverse effect alcohol has on a person's inhibitory control when it comes to food.

Eating after consuming alcohol is not uncommon and, in the past, many researchers have linked alcohol to the stimulation of appetite and energy intake.

Dr Paul Christiansen's study investigated whether the effects of alcohol on [energy intake](#) are the result of [inhibitory control](#) impairments and whether this effect is moderated by individual differences in [dietary restraint](#).

Impaired

As part of the study 60 undergraduate women were randomly assigned to either drink a mixed beverage of vodka and diet lemonade, or a diet lemonade that had a vodka mist sprayed on the top of the glass so the women would believe there was alcohol in their drink.

After drinking their beverages, the women were asked to fill out a food craving questionnaire and complete a challenging task. In the task, the words blue, red, yellow and green appeared in a different colour. For example, the word "red" was written in the colour yellow. The women were asked to say out loud what colour the words were printed in.

After that, the women were given chocolate chip cookies and were told they can eat as much or as little as they wanted.

The women who drank alcohol performed worse in the task (compared to the women in the placebo group) and the extent to which alcohol effected their [task performance](#) was associated with increased cookie consumption.

Contributor to weight gain

Dr Christiansen, said: "The study suggests that the reason some of the women ate more cookies following alcohol was because their inhibitory control was impaired not because they experienced heightened cravings.

"Interestingly, the [women](#) in the study who were considered the most restrained eaters – people limiting how much they eat to lose or maintain their weight – did not consume more cookies, despite alcohol induced impairments in task performance. One explanation for this is that highly restrained eaters put considerably more effort into resisting food.

"These findings highlight the role of [alcohol consumption](#) as a contributor to weight gain and suggest that further research into the role of restraint in [alcohol](#)-induced food consumption is needed."

More information: Paul Christiansen et al. Alcohol's Acute Effect on Food Intake Is Mediated by Inhibitory Control Impairments., *Health Psychology* (2015). [DOI: 10.1037/hea0000320](https://doi.org/10.1037/hea0000320)

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