

How nutrition information leads you to buy more

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THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE OF EATING

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We've collected the newest thinking from 30 consumer behavior researchers into the inaugural issue of the Journal of the Association for Consumer Research.

I. HUNGER AND SATIETY



SKIP DINNER IF YOU'RE NOT HUNGRY: Spikes in your blood sugar can lead to weight gain. ¹



DON'T CALL IT HEALTHY: You overeat food called "healthy" because you think it's less filling. ²



MAKE LESS - WASTE LESS: Low-income families prepare too much food in fear of "running out." ³



MIRRORS = MINDFULNESS: Kitchen mirrors make you dislike unhealthy food. ⁴

II. SHOPPING AND DINING



HAPPY MEALS CAN BE HEALTHY MEALS: Brain scans show that small prizes keep you happy when eating less food. ⁵



DISNEY HELPS DIETS: When juice and fruit came with meals, Disney World goers consumed 11-24% more of them. ⁶



READ CAREFULLY: Per-serving calorie labels can lead to mindless overeating. ⁷



SLICE SMALLER: Smaller portions (and bigger tables) lead to smaller meals. ⁸



FOOD PANTRY SOLUTIONS: Behavioral economics in food pantries lead to healthier shopping. ⁹

III. MINDLESSLY EATING BETTER



USE SMALL PLATES: You serve 20-25% less when using small plates - but only if a researcher is not watching! ¹⁰



THE LESS FANCY THE PLATE, the Less You'll Eat. We may eat the least off paper plates. ¹¹



FORKS OVER SPOONS: Forks (versus spoons) make you overestimate calories. ¹²



AVOID NEGATIVE MESSAGES: Telling dieters "Don't eat cookies" can double how much they eat. Use 2-sided messages instead. ¹³

IV. THE FUTURE OF FOOD RESEARCH

FROM FRINGE TO FOCUS:

The Behavioral Science of Eating: Encouraging Boundary Research that has Impact ¹⁴

Boundary Research: Tools and Rules to Impact Emerging Fields ¹⁵



LEARN MORE AND WATCH THE VIDEOS
FOODPSYCHOLOGY.CORNELL.EDU/JACR



- ¹ Gal, JACR 2016
- ² Suher, Raghunathan & Hoyer, JACR 2016
- ³ Porpino, JACR 2016
- ⁴ Jami, JACR 2016
- ⁵ Reimann, MacInnis & Bechara, JACR 2016
- ⁶ Peters, Beck, Lande, Pan, Cardel, Ayoob & Hill, JACR 2016
- ⁷ Elshiewy, Jahn & Boztug, JACR 2016
- ⁸ Davis, Payne & Bui, JACR 2016
- ⁹ Wilson, JACR 2016
- ¹⁰ Holden, Zlatevska & Dubelaar, JACR 2016
- ¹¹ Williamson, Block & Keller, JACR 2016
- ¹² Szocs & Biswas, JACR 2016
- ¹³ Pham, Mandel & Morales, JACR 2016
- ¹⁴ Van Ittersum & Wansink, JACR 2016
- ¹⁵ Wansink & van Ittersum, JCB 2016

Credit: Brian Wansink

Have you ever been to the supermarket and chosen foods based on nutrition labels? If so, be cautious, because the nutrition values you see on labels can substantially differ based on the recommended serving size, with undesired consequences for your purchase behavior.

According to a new research published in the *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, smaller recommended serving sizes on nutrition labels can unknowingly lead you to buy more than you need.

Consumer researchers from Germany, who conducted the research, found that shoppers bought more yogurt when the recommended serving size was smaller. In their study the researchers analyzed millions of food purchases in European supermarkets before and after the introduction of a front-of-pack nutrition label. The data covered two years and 61 products from a healthy (yogurt) and unhealthy (cookies) category.

"Smaller recommended serving sizes will let all nutrition values on the label appear smaller too, independent of the product's actual nutritional composition" says lead author Dr. Ossama Elshiewy from the University of Goettingen. Shoppers, who read [nutrition labels](#), tend to ignore the smaller recommended serving size and think that these products are healthier than others. "The problem is that people are comparing [calorie information](#) that is not comparable," Dr. Elshiewy adds.

Co-author Dr. Steffen Jahn, also from the University of Goettingen, suggests to always check the recommended serving size when reading nutrition labels. "This will prevent you from underestimating nutrition amounts and will make your choices healthier."

More information: Elshiewy, Ossama, Steffen Jahn and Yasemin Boztug (2016). Seduced by the Label: How the Recommended Serving Size on Nutrition Labels Affects Food Sales, The Journal of the Association for Consumer Research, 1.

Provided by Cornell Food & Brand Lab

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