

New resources for dietary assessment in health research

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Credit: University of Southampton

The links between diet and health are becoming ever more apparent. A detailed understanding of the amounts and types of food people consume is vital to revealing the impact diet has on our health—such as links between sugar consumption, diabetes and obesity.

There is a wide variety of dietary assessment tools available, but no agreed standards to help researchers select the best method to measure [diet](#).

A team of nutrition and health experts, led by the University of Leeds

working with the University of Southampton, has now published best practice advice on how to select the most appropriate assessment [tool](#) based on study design.

The research, published in *BMC Medicine*, used feedback gathered from epidemiologists, statisticians, public health specialists and authors of dietary intake assessments.

Study co-author Dr Nisreen Alwan, Associate Professor in Public Health at the University of Southampton, said: "These guidelines are a big leap forward for improving the quality of epidemiological and [public health](#) research. So far, causal inferences of [health](#) outcomes involving diet have been difficult to affirm due to the inconsistent quality of dietary assessment."

Janet Cade, Professor of Nutritional Epidemiology and Public Health at the University of Leeds and first author, said: "Dietary assessment is complex. Currently, there is a reliance on self-reporting for assessment and some dietary assessment tools are more prone to error than others.

"This means guidance is urgently needed for researchers to aid them in selecting the best tool based on their [study design](#). By developing strategies that are easily accessible, we can strengthen the quality of diet and disease relationship research."

The best practice guidelines will be available on the [Nutritools website](#). This website has been developed by the DIETary Assessment Tools NETwork (DIET@NET)—a partnership funded by the Medical Research Council.

More information: DIET@NET: Best Practice Guidelines for dietary assessment in health research, *BMC Medicine* (2017). [DOI: 10.1186/s12916-017-0962-x](#)

Provided by University of Southampton

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