

Simple tips can lead to better food choices

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A few easily learned tips on eating and food choice can increase amount of healthy food choices between 5 percent and 11 percent, a new Yale University study has found.

"That is as large an effect as many current obesity treatments—but obtained after a short [training](#) procedure," said Hedy Kober, associate professor of psychiatry and psychology and senior author of a study

published the week of Nov. 12 in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Two-thirds of the U.S. population is currently overweight and obesity is the second-leading cause of preventable disease. However, finding effective ways to combat the epidemic has been difficult—especially when people are regularly faced with choices between healthy but high-priced food and cheaper high-calorie fare.

Kober and her students conducted a series of experiments to measure the effects of simple cognitive training techniques on eating habits. In one experiment, people read literature on healthy foods and received 15 minutes of training to think, when experiencing cravings, of how good they will feel if they choose a nutritious [healthy food](#). Conversely, they introduced another group of subjects to information on the negative impact of junk food and trained them to think of the damaging effects of unhealthy foods.

Both strategies worked—with subjects improving [food](#) choices and consuming an average of 107 calories less in their next meal.

Kober said these simple techniques as well as the practice of mindfulness—allowing oneself to experience cravings as they occur before acting on them—offer some realistic options for those wishing to lose weight and improve eating habits.

"Even if you make a single good [choice](#) a day, that in the long run can translate into the loss of many pounds," Kober said.

More information: Rebecca G. Boswell et al. Training in cognitive strategies reduces eating and improves food choice, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (2018). [DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1717092115](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1717092115)

Provided by Yale University

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