

More than enough on our plates

February 7 2019

A smaller portion of fish and chips has been embraced by takeaway owners and customers, research has found and may well be healthier for us.

Experts led by Newcastle University worked with independent fish and [chip](#) supplier, Henry Colbeck to see whether people could be encouraged to eat a healthier size portion which led to the development of the Lite-BITE box. Its smaller dimensions ensures a smaller portion of fish and chips coming close to 600 calories compared to an average fish and chip meal containing over 1,600 calories.

Henry Colbeck supplies fish and chip shops with Frozen-at-Sea fish, frozen foods, frying oils and packaging to over 2,500 fish and chip shops in the North of England and Scotland. Together with the academic team, they wanted to reduce obesity levels in the UK but decided they needed to tackle it in a different way by offering their customers a smaller portion size to consumers.

The work is published today in *BMJ Open* by researchers from Fuse, The Centre for Translational Research in Public Health involving Newcastle, Durham, Cambridge and Teesside Universities. It is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) School for Public Health Research (SPHR).

The research describes how takeaway owners were supported with a three hour session which highlighted the problem of excessive portion sizes, customers' desire to be more health conscious and have smaller

meals. They were also supplied with promotional posters and business incentives of free packaging and [customer](#) loyalty points.

Encouraged by the findings, Henry Colbeck came up with the Lite-BITE box to ensure a smaller portion meal that's closer to 600 kcal.

Lead author Louis Goffe, Research Associate at Newcastle University and member of Fuse, The Centre for Translational Research said: "I love fish and chips and this research aims to find a way that we can have our fish and chip treat—but less of it.

"We focussed on coming up with a solution which provides a healthier meal option but equally importantly works for the fish and chip shop owners. The sales show that there is a demand for smaller portion meals and we hope this will act as a template for others in the fast-food sector to follow."

Jackie Pearson, Head of Marketing at Henry Colbeck Limited said: "The Lite-BITE boxes have been hugely popular and sales have continued to grow with over 250 shops now using the boxes and buying over 700,000 in the last year.

"We have national coverage to the UK fish and chip market through our two sister companies, Friar's Pride and VA Whitley. Combined, we have sold 12,000 cases of Lite-BITE boxes in 2018 which equates to 12,000,000 boxes."

A 600 calorie meal fits within Government nutritional guidelines for meal sizes and a meal of 5oz fish and 5oz of chips, fried in vegetable oil, is around 650 calories.

The research describes through sales, secret-shopper, customer surveys and interviews completed with 12 participating [fish](#) and chip shops that

customers happily purchased the smaller [portions](#) and takeaway owners were happy to sell them.

Louis Goffe added: "The independent takeaway sector is one of the most challenging food sectors to work with to make changes. This research emphasises the importance of working with wholesale suppliers, who have a strong relationship with traders, to improve the health benefits of hot food takeaways—and Henry Colbeck have taken a lead in that, understanding the changing market and giving customers what they want, a lighter meal."

Fish and chip shop owner's perspective

David Pascoe, is director and co-owner of Green Lane Fisheries in South Shields. He said: "The Lite-BITE box has been really popular, especially with older customers.

"A lot of customers don't like a full portion so we can put a smaller one in the box and it's really flexible.

"Some people can't eat a full portion or prefer a smaller one—and we've found they like the smaller size and then come back another time."

More information: Louis Goffe et al, Feasibility of working with a wholesale supplier to co-design and test acceptability of an intervention to promote smaller portions: an uncontrolled before-and-after study in British Fish & Chip shops, *BMJ Open* (2019). [DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2018-023441](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2018-023441)

Provided by Newcastle University

Citation: More than enough on our plates (2019, February 7) retrieved 16 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-02-plates.html>

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