

Fruit, vegetables and exercise can make you happier

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Credit: Unsplash

New research led by the University of Kent and University of Reading has found that fruit and vegetable consumption and exercise can increase levels of happiness.

While the link between [lifestyle](#) and wellbeing has been previously documented and often used in [public health campaigns](#) to encourage healthier diets and exercise, new findings published by the *Journal of Happiness Studies* show that there is also a positive causation from lifestyle to life satisfaction.

This research is the first of its kind to unravel the causation of how happiness, the consumption of [fruit](#) and vegetables and exercising are related, rather than generalizing a correlation. The researchers, Dr. Adelina Gschwandtner (Kent's School of Economics), Dr. Sarah Jewell and Professor Uma Kambhampati (both from the University of Reading's School of Economics), used an instrumental variable approach to filter out any effect from happiness to lifestyle. It showed that it is rather the consumption of fruit and vegetables and exercising that makes people happy and not the other way round.

Findings demonstrate that the ability of individuals to delay gratification and apply [self-control](#) plays a major role in influencing lifestyle decisions, which in turn has a positive impact on wellbeing. The research also shows that men appear to exercise more, and women eat more fruit and vegetables.

With it being well known that lifestyle diseases are a leading cause of ill health and mortality worldwide, and the UK having one of the highest obesity rates in Europe, these findings could have significant implications for public health policy.

Dr. Gschwandtner said: "Behavioral nudges that help the planning self to reinforce long-term objectives are likely to be especially helpful in maintaining a [healthy lifestyle](#). If a better lifestyle not only makes us healthier but also happier, then it is a clear win-win situation."

Professor Kambhampati said: "There has been a bigger shift in recent

years for healthier lifestyle choices. To establish that eating more fruit and vegetables and exercising can increase [happiness](#) as well as offer health benefits is a major development. This may also prove useful for policy campaigns around environment and sustainability."

Their [research paper](#) titled "Lifestyle and Life Satisfaction: The Role of Delayed Gratification' is published by the *Journal of Happiness Studies*.

More information: Adelina Gschwandtner et al, Lifestyle and Life Satisfaction: The Role of Delayed Gratification, *Journal of Happiness Studies* (2021). [DOI: 10.1007/s10902-021-00440-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-021-00440-y)

Provided by University of Kent

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