

# Healthy eating education improves young adults' eating habits

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A population health survey in Hong Kong revealed that 50% of people aged 15 to 84 were either overweight or obese because of insufficient intake of wholegrains, fruits, and vegetables, and the increasing

consumption of sugar-sweetened and alcoholic beverages, convenience foods, take-out food, and other high-density, low-nutrient foods.

The research by Dr. Louisa Chung Ming-yan, Assistant Professor at the Department of Health and Physical Education, The Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK), found that [public education](#) to promote awareness of healthy eating and transferring knowledge about balanced diets has played a pivotal role in positively changing people's eating behavior in Hong Kong. Younger adults, however, are found to lack skills in planning, purchasing, preparing, and cooking healthy meals at home, and tend to select nutritionally inadequate pre-packaged foods. Establishing [healthy eating habits](#) is considered to be a sustainable strategy for good health maintenance, and [mobile apps](#) are expected to be a highly effective way to promote healthy eating among young adults. But there are few interventions that apply apps to improve younger adults' nutrition behavior.

In this study published in *Nutrients*, a dietary monitoring mobile app, called the "eDietary Portal," integrated with behavioral feedback, was evaluated in people aged 19 to 39. The primary aim was to investigate the effectiveness of the app in improving the nutrition knowledge and dietary habits of younger adults by increasing the consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and decreasing the consumption of salt and sugar.

Both the experimental group and the control group were given a three-hour nutrition seminar, but the experimental group also underwent 12 weeks of dietary monitoring with the app. Behavioral feedback delivered by the app was evaluated to facilitate the transfer of nutritional knowledge to nutrition behavior. Baseline and post-intervention nutrition knowledge and dietary behavior were collected. All mean scores of post-GNKQ-R increased from the baseline for both the control and experimental groups.

The study found that both the control group and the experimental group improved their nutrition knowledge, thanks to the seminar, but the app encouraged dietary reflection, making the experimental subjects more capable of matching [food products](#) to food categories, choosing healthy foods, and selecting foods to reduce health problems and the risk of disease.

Both the control group and the experimental group increased their intake of dietary fiber, whole grains, and fruits and vegetables, but the increase was greater in the experimental group, particularly fruit and vegetable consumption. The experimental group reduced sugar consumption more than the control group, but the difference in salt consumption was insignificant. Larger individuals in the experimental group were more likely to increase fruit consumption.

The research concluded that the integration of knowledge transfer about healthy eating with a mobile app is essential for technology-immersed young people. Healthy eating promotion conducted with appropriate technology apps can help users to acquire information flexibly in terms of time, pace, and place, can be adapted to individual needs, and allows reflection by users.

**More information:** Louisa Ming Yan Chung et al, Younger Adults Are More Likely to Increase Fruit and Vegetable Consumption and Decrease Sugar Intake with the Application of Dietary Monitoring, *Nutrients* (2021). [DOI: 10.3390/nu13020333](https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13020333)

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