

Study finds consuming refined carbs might be linked to perceived facial attractiveness

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The new research suggests that facial attractiveness appears to be impacted by immediate and chronic refined carbohydrate consumption in men and women.

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In a new study, participants' levels of consumption of refined

carbohydrates were statistically linked with their facial attractiveness as rated by heterosexual volunteers of the opposite sex. Visine and colleagues at the University of Montpellier, France, present these findings in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE*.

The Western diet consists of high levels of refined carbohydrates—foods processed in ways that typically remove much of their [nutritional value](#), such as white flour, table sugar, and ingredients in many packaged snacks. Prior research has linked increased consumption of refined carbohydrates with [adverse health effects](#), such as obesity, type II diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases.

Preliminary evidence has suggested that consuming high levels of refined carbohydrates might also affect non-medical traits, such as a person's attractiveness. To further explore this possibility, Visine and colleagues conducted a study involving 104 French male and female adults.

The researchers gave some of the participants a high-glycemic breakfast—one with refined carbohydrates known to boost blood sugar levels—while others received a low-glycemic breakfast. The participants also completed a questionnaire to evaluate their typical habits of consumption of refined carbohydrates.

Additional heterosexual volunteers were then asked to rate the [facial attractiveness](#) of opposite-sex participants as captured in photos taken two hours after the provided breakfast. Only participants and volunteers with four grandparents of European origin were included in this research, to reduce cultural heterogeneity.

Statistical analysis showed that consuming the high-glycemic breakfast was associated with lower subsequent facial attractiveness ratings for both men and women. Chronic consumption of refined carbohydrates

during [breakfast](#) and snacks was also associated with lower attractiveness ratings, although consumption of high-energy foods at these times was associated with higher attractiveness ratings.

The researchers noted some sex differences: for afternoon snacking in men specifically, high-energy intake was instead associated with lower attractiveness ratings, while high-glycemic intake was linked to higher attractiveness ratings.

All results held true after statistically accounting for other factors that could affect attractiveness, such as actual age, perceived age, BMI, smoking habits, and facial hairiness. Further research, including for larger and more diverse sample sizes, is needed to deepen understanding of exactly how refined carbohydrates may be linked to attractiveness and other social traits.

The authors add, "Facial attractiveness, an important factor of social interactions, seems to be impacted by immediate and chronic refined carbohydrate consumption in men and women."

More information: Chronic and immediate refined carbohydrate consumption and facial attractiveness, *PLoS ONE* (2024). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0298984](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0298984)

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