

Short-term food deprivation appears linked to high-calorie food options

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A research letter by Brian Wansink, Ph.D., and Aner Tal, Ph.D., of Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., suggests that hungry grocery shoppers tend to buy higher-calorie products.

The research included a [laboratory study](#) in which 68 paid participants were asked to avoid eating five hours prior to the study, although during some of the sessions some of the participants were given crackers so they would no longer feel hungry. A follow-up field study tracked the purchases of 82 participants at different times of the day when they were most likely to be full or hungry.

According to the results, hungry laboratory participants chose a higher number of higher-calorie products but there were no differences between conditions in the number of lower-calorie choices and the total number of food items selected. Field study shoppers who completed the study at times when they were more likely to be hungry (between 4-7 p.m.) bought less low-calorie food relative to high-calorie food options compared with those who completed the study when they were less likely to be hungry, the results also indicate.

"Even short-term [food deprivation](#) can lead to a shift in choices such that people choose less low-calorie, and relatively more high-calorie, [food options](#). Given the prevalence of short-term food deprivation, this has important [health implications](#)," the study concludes.

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