

EATING HEALTHILY IS GOOD. EATING HAPPILY IS BETTER!

Pleasure and health are often considered as two opposite concepts when it comes to eating, especially by children. So far, public health campaigns, in particular those aimed at children, focus on foods' nutritional value and differentiate "healthy" foods from "unhealthy" foods. But are health and pleasure really incompatible among children?

To answer this question, a study was carried out by researchers from the CSGA on 63 children aged between 6 and 12 years old. The children were invited to the laboratory to have a snack. Each of them had to choose five food items from a buffet filled with foods of varying nutritional quality, such as fruits, cakes and sweets (see the picture). Then, they completed the YUM test¹ to assess hedonic versus nutritional basis of food-related attitudes.

Results showed that children with more hedonic-based attitudes toward food were more likely to choose healthy food options from the buffet: on average, they selected one more serving of fruits on the buffet than children who linked food to health.

These findings are at odds with the widespread idea that acquiring a "nutritional awareness" from an early age could guarantee a healthy diet. On the contrary, these findings suggest that the pleasure of eating could be used as a lever in campaigns aiming to promote "healthy" food consumption among children.



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To know more

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Key-words

Eating; attitudes; choice; pleasure; health; children

¹ https://www2.dijon.inra.fr/csga/doc/actualite/juillet_2016_miam.pdf (in French)