

USING BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TO INFLUENCE CHILDREN'S DIETS

A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

The global prevalence of childhood **overweight and obesity continues to rise**. Many children live in obesogenic environments that encourage the consumption of energy-dense foods.

Policies informed by '**behavioural insights**' have shown potential for improving children's diets.

What are behavioural insights?

Behavioural insights (BI) **help to understand how people make choices in everyday life**, drawing on disciplines such as economics, psychology, sociology and neuroscience.

Usually, BI are used in interventions to make **subtle changes to the environment** without actively restricting available options.

This review investigated the effectiveness of five such interventions.

1. Information provision

Providing **nutritional facts or changing serving size indications** on packages will, by themselves, not be sufficient to change behaviour in children. Such actions can, however, be more effective if combined with other interventions.

2. Salience and social norms

Interventions using visual cues, such as **positive emojis next to healthy options**, were found to lead to changes in behaviour by 76% of studies.

Social modelling by teachers or peers were also effective. Verbal cues were least so.

3. Default

Adapting default options, like **changing the main side dish option** to a healthier one, was effective according to 71% of studies.

4. Physical environment

Changing **portion sizes**, or improving the **accessibility of healthy options** compared to unhealthy ones were also effective. 80% of studies showed significant results.

5. Incentives

Using incentives such as stickers, stationary or temporary tattoos were also effective. Using **simple social rewards can be a promising and low-cost approach** for changing children's health behaviours.

What can be done with this knowledge?

The review showed that there is **significant potential to change children's behaviour in school settings at a low cost**. Even small changes in children's environments can significantly influence diet-related outcomes.

Interventions **targeting healthier options** were found to be more effective than those targeting unhealthy ones.

However, **too little is known about sustained effects on health and health equity**, and longer-term cost-effectiveness. Interventions using BI, combined with other policy approaches are worth further investigation.





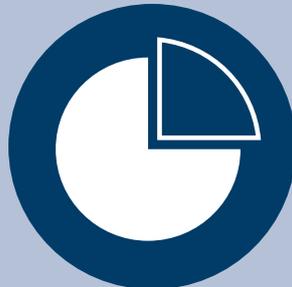
Science and Technology in
childhood Obesity Policy

Using behavioural insights to influence children's diets

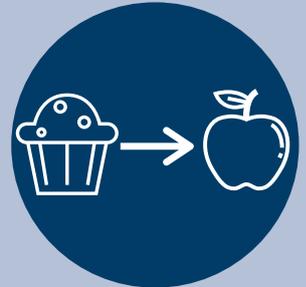
Most effective interventions to influence children's diets based on Behavioural Insights:



USING
INCENTIVES

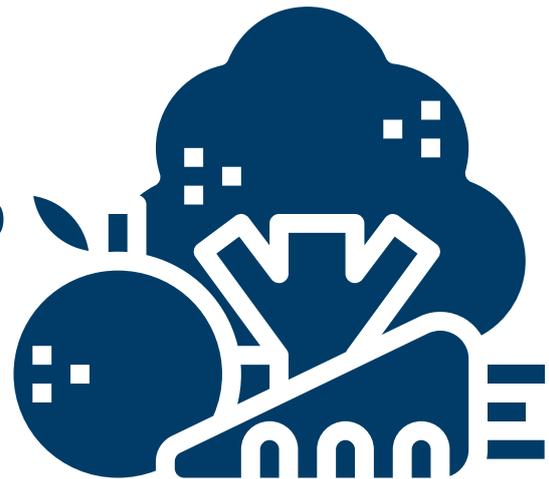


MODIFYING
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



CHANGING
DEFAULTS

INTERVENTIONS ARE MOST SUCCESSFUL IF THEY ARE TARGETED AT HEALTHIER OPTIONS INSTEAD OF UNHEALTHY OPTIONS.



Future research should focus on:

FOOD RETAIL AND
HOME SETTINGS



HEALTH EQUITY

SUSTAINABILITY



COST-
EFFECTIVENESS

