

## Food Environment Interventions to Improve the Dietary Behavior of Young Adults in Tertiary Education Settings: A Systematic Literature Review

The food environment refers to the number, type and accessibility of food outlets and the availability, cost, quality and promotion of food and beverage products. Obesogenic environments, linked to high accessibility of unhealthy products often high in fat, sugar and salt, may lead to weight gain and obesity. Young adults, typically with lower disposable incomes, may be particularly vulnerable to weight gain in their college years. With many young adults globally enrolled in higher education, it is important to understand how to improve their food environment. This systematic review identifies and assesses the health promotion strategies that have been used in college and university settings. The aim was to improve the food choices of young adults through learning more about changes to the food environment.

The initial database search found 297 abstracts. Against a selection criteria, this was reduced to 15 studies of high (n=5), medium (n=7) and poor quality (n=2). Of these, 13 studies showed positive improvements following interventions aimed at young adults. Information relating to healthy foods through signage and labels (n=10) showed improvements in food choices. Increasing the availability of healthy foods and decreasing the portion size of unhealthy foods (n=2) improved dietary intake. A combination of price reduction, increased availability of healthy foods and nutrition information had a positive effect on nutrition related health outcomes.

The authors concluded that studies show a range of interventions in college and university settings improve young adults dietary intake. However, much of the reviewed research had weaknesses decreasing the strength of the conclusions. Consequently higher quality research in this area is required for more robust evidence on the effectiveness of interventions. Nevertheless, the results of the systemic review are still considered useful to influence trials of intervention strategies for healthier food environments in educational settings for young adults.

Reference: Roy R, Kelly B, Rangan A, Allman-Farinelli M. Food Environment Interventions to Improve the Dietary Behavior of Young Adults in Tertiary Education Settings: A Systematic Literature Review. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*. 2015;115(10):1647-1681.e1. [doi:10.1016/j.jand.2015.06.380](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2015.06.380)