



‘Traffic-light’ nutrition labelling and ‘junk-food’ tax: a modelled comparison of cost-effectiveness for obesity prevention

Given the growing prevalence of obesity and obesity-related diseases, governments around the world are exploring cost-effective and efficient obesity-prevention interventions. Unfortunately, a limited amount of information is available regarding the cost-effectiveness of such interventions. Therefore, “this paper examined the potential impact of two policy-based population-wide interventions: front-of-pack traffic-light nutrition labelling and a tax on unhealthy foods (‘junk-food’ tax).”

In this study estimations from traffic-light labelling were based on changes in energy intake assuming 10% shift in consumption towards healthier options in four food categories (breakfast cereals, pastries, sausages and prepared meals). For the junk-food tax, price elasticities were used to estimate a change in energy intake in response to a 10% price increase in seven food categories (e.g. sugary drinks, confectionery and snack foods). Overall, the study suggests that the labelling intervention led to a reduction in daily energy intake. Furthermore, the cost-effectiveness analysis suggests that both of the studied interventions are likely to be ‘dominant’ (effective and cost saving) in the current modelled context. Policy-based population-wide interventions such as traffic-light nutrition labelling and taxes on unhealthy foods are likely to offer excellent ‘value for money’ as obesity prevention measures.

Reference: G Sacks et al. ‘Traffic-light’ nutrition labelling and ‘junk-food’ tax: a modelled comparison of cost-effectiveness for obesity prevention. *International Journal of Obesity*. 2010;35(7):1001–1009. DOI: [10.1038/ijo.2010.228](https://doi.org/10.1038/ijo.2010.228)