

Reward sensitivity increases food 'wanting' following television 'junk food' commercials

July 10 2012

Research to be presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Ingestive Behavior (SSIB), the foremost society for research into all aspects of eating and drinking behavior, sought to investigate personality traits that make some people more vulnerable to over-eating and weight gain.

[Obesity rates](#) have been partly attributed to the easy access of cheap, high calorie food. However, many individuals exposed to the same food lie well within the healthy weight range. In her study, Dr. Natalie Loxton proposed reward sensitivity as a key trait predisposing some individuals to be highly attracted to cues linked with appetitive food - such as a television commercial marketing [junk food](#).

"We tested whether reward-sensitive individuals would experience greater pleasure and urge to eat after watching [TV commercials](#) featuring junk food, compared with those featuring [healthy food](#) or no food", Dr. Loxton said.

This independent study comprised of 75 men and women who watched a 30 minute film embedded with junk food, healthy food, or no food featured in the commercials. Participants rated the pleasantness of food images and their desire to eat after watching the films.

"As hypothesised, reward sensitivity was associated with an increase in urge to eat in the junk food condition. There was no association in the healthy food condition and a reduced desire to eat in the no food

condition," she said.

Dr. Loxton also discovered that reward sensitivity was associated with greater liking of junk food images, but only for women. There was no effect of reward sensitivity on liking of healthy food or non-food images.

Dr. Loxton confirmed that these findings support the role of greater food wanting in high reward sensitive individuals in response to appetitive food cues.

Provided by Society for the Study of Ingestive Behavior

Citation: Reward sensitivity increases food 'wanting' following television 'junk food' commercials (2012, July 10) retrieved 16 December 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-07-reward-sensitivity-food-television-junk.html>

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