

On the road to obesity: Television viewing increases intake of high-density foods,

Blass, E. M.; Anderson, D.; Kirkorian, H.; Pempek, T. A.; Price, I.; Koleini, M.,
Physiology and Behavior, 2006

Abstract:

Television viewing has been linked with obesity, possibly through increased sedentary behavior and/or through increased ingestion during television viewing. The proposition that television viewing causes increased feeding, however, has not been subjected to experimental verification until recently. Our objective was to determine if the amount eaten of two familiar, palatable, high-density foods (pizza and macaroni and cheese) was increased during a 30-min meal when watching TV. In a within-subjects design, one group of undergraduates (n = 10) ate pizza while watching a TV show of their choice for one session and when listening to a symphony during the other session. A second group of undergraduates (n = 10) ate macaroni and cheese. Television viewing increased caloric intake by 36% (one slice on average) for pizza and by 71% for macaroni and cheese.

Eating patterns also differed between conditions. Although the length of time to eat a slice of pizza remained stable between viewing conditions, the amount of time before starting another slice was shorter during television viewing. In contrast, macaroni and cheese was eaten at a faster rate and for a longer period of time during television viewing. Thus, watching television increases the amount eaten of high-density, palatable, familiar foods and may constitute one vector contributing to the current obesity crisis.

College students ate more pizza and Macaroni & Cheese while watching TV for 30 minutes as compared to listening to music for the same period of time.