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Does a pleasure-based intervention at home improve the nutritional quality of mid-afternoon snacks in the mother-child dyads?

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The French mid-afternoon snack is characterized by consumption of energy-dense foods. Nutrition labelling can constitute a lever to improve choices but at the expense of liking (Poquet et al., 2017). Thus, it seems important to develop strategies to increase the pleasure of consuming healthy foods. Our aim is to compare the nutritional quality of snacks chosen within mother-child dyads before and after a pleasure-based intervention.

At baseline (T1) and eight weeks later (T2), mothers and children (n=189 7-11 years) were invited in the laboratory to choose separately a snack composed of two food items (among ten) for a mid-afternoon snack for themselves and for the other dyad's member. Then, they rated their liking for all items. One of the two snacks chosen by oneself and by the other dyad's member was randomly selected to be consumed. Participants were then randomized into an intervention (n=95) or a control (n=94) group. Between T1 and T2, all participants will receive three boxes at home. The intervention boxes targeted three dimensions of pleasure (sensory, symbolic and social) to stimulate pleasure of eating three categories of healthy foods: fruit, dairy and cereal products. The control boxes are focused on culinary arts.

Results at T1 showed that mother's choices for themselves were healthier than children's choices for themselves ($P < 0.0001$). Furthermore, results showed that the nutritional quality of children's choices for their mother was higher than for themselves ($P < 0.0001$), whereas the nutritional quality of mother's choices for their child was lower than for themselves ($P < 0.0005$). At T2 (next April), healthier snack choices are expected for both dyads' members in the intervention group compared to the control one, with no hedonic cost associated with the expected increase of the nutritional quality of choices.

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