

Many buying decisions are non-conscious and the environment influences our decisions

One study found that an average food purchasing decision took just half a second.

Choices that are on “auto-pilot” are particularly susceptible to environmental cues or influences.

We tend to opt for the middle option among a set of choices. This applies to portion sizes - people will typically choose medium from small, medium and large. But if the choices are changed to medium, large and X-large, people typically choose large.

Many people don't think when they eat

We tend to eat the food that is put in front of us rather than stop eating when we are satisfied.

Giving people larger plates or a larger portion size have both been found to increase the amount that they eat.

Which is the bigger portion?
They're the same!



Ease and convenience

Making a behaviour easier for people is a very effective way to encourage it.

Examples:

- Making salad easier to serve by changing the utensils increased the amount of salad taken.
- People drank more bottled water when it was moved to easier-to-reach areas in a canteen

Small barriers can stop unhealthy decisions.

Example:

- Simply having wrappers on chocolates reduced the number that were eaten.



evidence from research

Shelf position

We tend to buy products that attract our attention, so where they are put is important, and children tend to be affected by this more.

Food positioned at the end of an aisle is more likely to be chosen than food in the middle.

Analysis of beverage sales found that sales increased for soft drinks by 52% when moved from the middle to the end of the aisle. So putting them on the end of the aisle increases unhealthy choices.

Amount of space

It has been suggested that if a lot of space is given to a product, it signals to customers that it must be because a lot of people are purchasing it.

Manipulating the amount of space given to healthy or unhealthy products has been shown to influence sales.

Increase the space given to healthier products and people can be shifted towards them.

What works best?

Changes focussed on the actions involved in eating or buying food work best.

Changing the environment to make healthy decisions more convenient taps into our automatic decision making.

Reduction in calories

This can be achieved for example through:

- Increasing proportions of vegetables, eg. salad in sandwiches; extra carrots and celery in bolognaise; healthier sides like corn on the cob or beans instead of chips
- Using different cooking methods eg. grilling rather than frying
- Smaller portion sizes

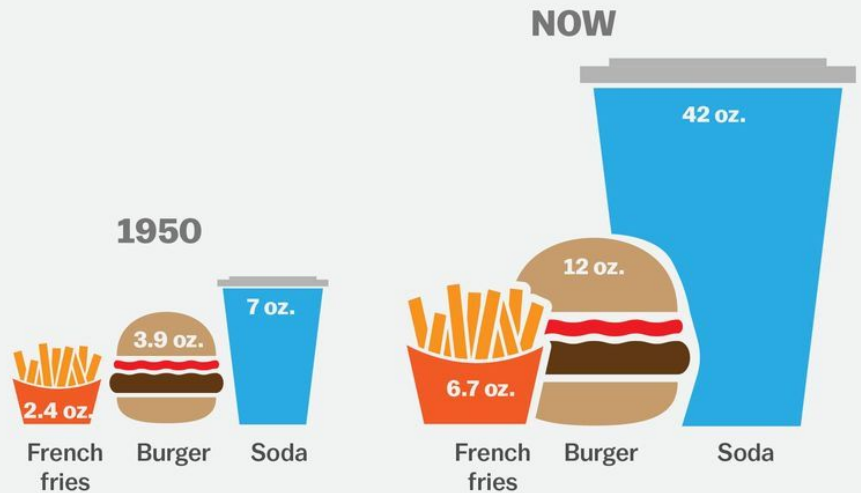
Reduction in fat

This can be achieved for example through:

- Grilling rather than frying
- Trimming fat and skin off meats
- Using lower fat alternatives such as skimmed rather than full fat milk
- Reduce added fat eg. beans or tuna with jacket potato instead of cheese; reduce or remove added butter

Re-thinking portion sizes

The average restaurant meal today is more than four times larger than in the 1950s



SOURCE: CDC

Drinking water

Drinking water is the healthiest drink option.

Juice is high in sugar (and calories) so it would be better to promote water as a healthier option rather than juice.

Healthier can be tasty

Remember, healthy food can still look and taste delicious! Customers want a choice of tasty food, including for children.

