

Impact of Menu-Labeling: Study Shows People Eat Less When They Know More

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The restaurant industry has lobbied hard against mandatory menu labeling in restaurants, highlighting the importance of a new study from Yale University measuring the impact of such regulations. Yale scientists found that calorie labels result in the consumption of significantly fewer calories. The study appears online in the American Journal of Public Health.

Researchers from the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale studied 303 adults in the New Haven community, dividing them into groups that saw a menu with no calorie labels, a menu with calorie labels, or a menu with calorie labels plus information on the recommended daily caloric intake for an average adult.

Participants in the two groups that saw calorie labels ate 14 percent fewer calories than the group that did not see calorie labels.

Furthermore, when after-dinner eating was factored in, the group that saw menu labels as well as recommended calorie guidelines consumed an average of 250 fewer calories than those in the other groups.

“This shows that adding a label about daily caloric needs to menu labeling positively impacts people’s [food choices](#), driving them to eat fewer [calories](#),” says lead author Christina Roberto, a Ph.D. student in Clinical Psychology and Epidemiology and Public Health at Yale.

Kelly Brownell, director of Yale’s Rudd Center said, “Menu labeling is a [public health](#) ‘no brainer.’ It is easy for restaurants to do and enhances consumer awareness about their choices.”

Previous research on the impact of menu labeling has had mixed results, but unlike other studies, this one measured what people actually ate both during and after a meal. The study design also allowed the Yale team to demonstrate a causal relationship between menu labeling and reduced food intake.

Provided by Yale University

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