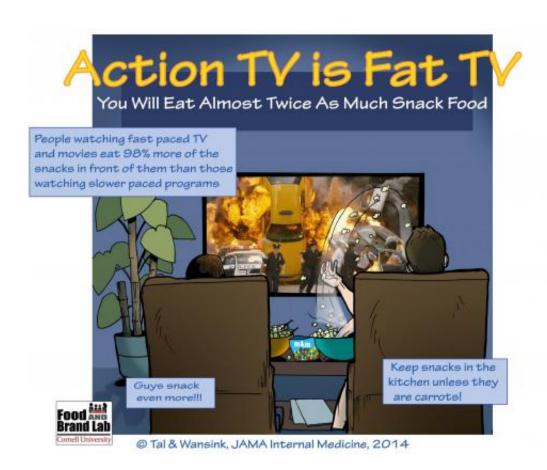# Snacking while watching action movies leads to overeating

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'More stimulating programs that are fast paced, include many camera cuts, really draw you in and distract you from what you are eating. They can make you eat more because you're paying less attention to how much you are putting in your mouth,' explains Tal. Credit: Daniel Miller

Is television making us fat? An increasing amount of research shows an

association between TV viewing and higher food consumption and a more sedentary lifestyle. Now, a new Cornell University study points out that not all TV is alike. Some TV programs might lead people to eat twice as much as other programs! "We find that if you're watching an action movie while snacking your mouth will see more action too!" says Aner Tal, Ph.D. lead author on the new article just published in the *JAMA Internal Medicine*. "In other words, the more distracting the program is the more you will eat."

In the study, conducted by researchers at the Cornell Food and Brand Lab, 94 [undergraduates](#) snacked on M&Ms, cookies, carrots and grapes while watching 20 minutes of television programming. A third of the participants watched a segment of the action movie The Island, a third watched a segment from the talk show, the Charlie Rose Show, and a third watched the same segment from The Island without sound.

"People who were watching The Island ate almost twice as many snacks – 98% more than those watching the talk show!" says co-author Brian Wansink, author of Slim by Design (forthcoming) and Professor and Director of the Cornell Food and Brand Lab. "Even those watching "The Island" without sound ate 36% more." People watching the more distracting content also consumed more calories, with 354 calories consumed by those watching The Island (314 calories with no sound) compared to 215 calories consumed by those watching the Charlie Rose Show.

"More stimulating programs that are fast paced, include many camera cuts, really draw you in and distract you from what you are eating. They can make you eat more because you're paying less attention to how much you are putting in your mouth," explains Tal. Because of this, programs that engage viewers more might wind up being worse for their diets!

So what can you do to avoid overeating during your favorite chase

scene? The researchers suggest pre-plating or pre-portioning your TV snacks instead of bringing out a whole bag of chips or box of cookies. Wansink notes that the best solution is to bring out the healthy munchable snacks, like carrots. "The good news," says Wansink "is that action movie watchers also eat more healthy foods, if that's what's in front of them. Take advantage of this!"

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