

What food gets people's attention? Junk food, by far

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(HealthDay)—If cookies, pizza and potato chips seem to pull you in,

you're not alone.

A new study finds that images of [junk food](#) are, indeed, more distracting than those of healthy [food](#). The researchers also found, though, that just a few tastes of junk food can significantly reduce its appeal.

"We wanted to see if pictures of food, particularly high-fat, high-calorie food, would be a distraction for people engaged in a complicated task," said co-author Howard Egeth, a professor in the department of psychological and brain sciences at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

The researchers showed the pictures to 18 participants, most of them undergraduate students.

"We showed them carrots and apples, and it slowed them down," Egeth said in a university news release. "We showed them bicycles and thumb tacks, and it slowed them down. But when we showed them chocolate cake and hot dogs, these things slowed them down about twice as much."

The researchers then repeated the experiment with 18 new participants, but first gave them two small candy bars before they began their task. This time, the study found that images of junk food were no more distracting than pictures of [healthy food](#) or nonfood items.

The findings were published online Oct. 26 in the journal *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review*.

The researchers believe the study findings highlight people's built-in bias for fatty, sugary foods and confirm the old saying that you shouldn't grocery shop when you're hungry.

Meet the Johns Hopkins researchers who describe their study

More information: The American Heart Association offers [healthy eating advice](#).

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