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Food cravings in a college population

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Abstract

A questionnaire was administered to over 1000 male and female college undergraduates to collect self-reports regarding food cravings (defined as an intense desire to eat a specific food). Ninety-seven per cent of women and 68 per cent of men reported experiencing food cravings. Chocolate was the most frequently reported food craved, especially among women. The majority of subjects reported that they indulged their food cravings at least half the time. Females tended to respond with more negative affect to indulging their cravings than men. Only 32 per cent of women perceived that their cravings were linked to menstrual cycles. There was no tendency for an increase in food cravings with dietary restraint. The data provided a detailed description of perceptions regarding food cravings among college-age adults, but also underscored some of the limitations of self-report measures of food craving. In spite of these limitations, however, the results challenge several assumptions regarding food craving and highlight some promising avenues for future investigation.

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