

[IMAGE]

Good Intentions Bad Choices

By Editorial Staff

We all know we should make healthy food choices. Many of us even actually intend to do so. However, and let's be honest here, when it comes right down to it, that brownie looks much more tempting than a banana. The question is: Why do we often pick that brownie over the banana, even as we tell ourselves the banana is the better choice?

- Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark In a study published in the September/October 2008 issue of the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, researchers recruited 585 office workers to determine if people actually follow through on their snack-choice intentions. Participants were asked about their intentions in choosing among four snacks: an apple, a banana (healthy snacks), a candy bar and a molasses waffle (unhealthy snacks).

About half of the participants indicated they would choose the healthy snack. However, when presented with the actual snacks one week later, 27 percent switched to the candy bar or waffle. Furthermore, more than 90 percent of those who intended to pick the unhealthy snack actually did so. Participants who selected the unhealthy snack choice intention were more likely to be male, less likely to eat healthy snacks, have a lower health attitude and consider the unhealthy snacks as more pleasant than the healthful snacks.

"A substantial gap between healthy snack-choice intentions and actual behavior was demonstrated," said the researchers. Despite that gap, the results suggest that individuals who plan to make a healthful choice are more likely to do so than those who plan to make unhealthful choices. Because more than 50 percent of the population seems to have no intention at all of making a healthful choice, identifying tools by which this group can be motivated to choose a healthful snack is strongly needed."

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