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Breakfast choice: an experiment combining a nutritional training workshop targeting adolescents and the promotion of unhealthy products

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Abstract

A randomised controlled trial was conducted to determine changes in the food and drink choices of adolescents following their participation in a one-day nutrition workshop. The experiment was conducted at 104 schools in Barcelona (126 classes, 3,291 adolescents). Schools were randomly selected stratifying by district and by public/private. The students were given three kinds of vouchers, with different options regarding the type of food for which they could be exchanged (standard for healthy food and drink, “two-for-one” for unhealthy food and “two-for-one” for unhealthy drink). Difference-in-differences linear models that control for individual, family, school/neighbourhood characteristics and the influence of peers were applied. The probability of students’ choosing unhealthy food and drink fell by 7.7% and 4.4%, respectively, following participation in the nutrition workshop. The students’ behaviour was price sensitive. Promotion of unhealthy beverages counteracts the positive impact of the workshop for beverages.