

Labels Showing Exercise Needed to Offset Food Helps

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Would you change your grocery list if a food label said, "Walk an hour to burn off the calories in this product?"

That's the idea behind a new push to include food labeling that describes the amount of exercise needed to burn off calories consumed, the researchers behind a new study said.

This labeling approach "is a simple strategy that could be easily included on food/beverage packaging by manufacturers, on shelving price labels in supermarkets, and/or in menus in restaurants/fast-food outlets," the study authors said in a journal news release.

For example, such labeling would show that a person would need to walk 42 minutes or run 22 minutes to burn off the 229 calories in a small bar of milk chocolate, said British researchers.

Analyzing data from 14 studies, the researchers found that people made healthier choices and ate less when confronted with exercise equivalents.

For example, people chose an average of 65 fewer calories per meal when physical activity calorie equivalent or expenditure (PACE) labeling was displayed on food, beverages and menus.

The labeling was also associated with consumption of 80 to 100 fewer calories compared with no labeling or other types of labeling, according to the findings.

The results suggest that this labeling could lead to people consuming about 200 fewer calories a day, based on an average consumption of three meals and two snacks a day, the authors explained.

The results were published online Dec. 10 in the *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*.

There were limitations, however. The researchers noted that they reviewed a small number of studies, the design of each study varied considerably, and most weren't conducted in real-life settings, such as restaurants and supermarkets.

Even so, exercise labeling "shows some promise in reducing the number of [calories] selected from menus, as well as the number of calories and the amount of food consumed," wrote Amanda Daley, a professor at Loughborough University School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, and colleagues.

Public health agencies may want to consider this as a strategy that contributes to the prevention and treatment of obesity and related diseases, the team concluded.