

Distraction, the desire to eat and food intake.  
Towards an expanded model of mindless eating.

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Research report

### Distraction, the desire to eat and food intake. Towards an expanded model of mindless eating

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### Abstract

This study compared the impact of different forms of distraction on eating behaviour with a focus on the mechanisms behind this association and the link between the amount consumed and changes in the desire to eat. Participants ( $n = 81$ ) were randomly allocated to four conditions: driving, television viewing, social interaction or being alone in which they took part in a taste test. Measures of the desire to eat (i.e. Hunger, fullness, motivation to eat) were assessed before and after the intervention. The results showed that those watching television consumed more than the social or driving conditions. Food intake was associated with a decreased desire to eat for those eating alone, but was unrelated to changes in the desire to eat for those driving. Watching television also created a decrease in the desire to eat commensurate with

food intake whereas social eating resulted in the reverse relationship. The results are discussed in terms an expanded model of mindless eating and it is argued that eating more requires not only distraction away from the symptom of hunger but also sufficient cognitive capacity left to attend to the process of eating.

## Highlights

• Participants ( $n = 81$ ) were randomly allocated to either the driving, watching television, social or being alone conditions. • Those watching television consumed more than the other conditions. • Food intake was unrelated to changes in the desire to eat for those driving. • Food intake was related to changes in the desire to eat for those watching television and eating alone. • Food intake involves both attention away from hunger and attention towards eating behaviour.



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## Keywords

Distraction; Cognitive capacity; Mindless eating; Taste test; Hunger

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