

Study confirms calorie listings don't have much bite

By ACSH Staff — February 16, 2011

Last month we [reported](#) [1] on a study in the Seattle-area showing that listing the calories in different items offered at fast food restaurants did not affect customers' eating habits. This conclusion is bolstered by a new [study](#) [2] undertaken in New York City and Newark, New Jersey published online by the *International Journal of Obesity*.

In July 2008, New York's City Council imposed regulations requiring chain restaurants — defined as those with at least fifteen outlets — to post counts of the calories in their different menu items. Researchers based at NYU examined the eating habits of young patrons at four chains: McDonald's, Burger King, KFC and Wendy's. To see if the new policy reduced consumers' calorie intake, the NYU team studied 427 teens and their parents before and after the counts went up in New York, and, as a control, in Newark, where no calorie counts were posted. Their findings? While 57 percent of teens said they saw the calorie counts, only nine percent said it had an "influence" on them. Moreover, according to lead researcher Dr. Brian Elbel, the study data didn't show "any change in the number of calories [consumed] before and after labeling started." [Speaking to Reuters](#) [3], he further observed, "We also didn't see any changes in the number of calories for choices parents were making for their kids."

ACSH's Cheryl Martin says that this shows "that kids don't care about calorie counts, which really shouldn't surprise anyone that much. It also proves what most of us already know: kids have influence over what parents buy."

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross believes that "in light of these studies, it's time for those who've argued that forcing certain restaurants to post calorie counts would be beneficial to public health to provide some evidence that they really are." He adds, "You might say, 'Where's the beef?'"

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2011/02/16/study-confirms-calorie-listings-dont-have-much-bite>
Links

[1] http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsid.2272/news_detail.asp

[2] <http://www.nature.com/ijo/journal/vaop/ncurrent/full/ijo20114a.html>

[3] <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/02/15/us-obesity-menus-idUSTRE71E3NP20110215>