

CHECK YOUR CHIPS

An analysis of takeaways in Brent

An investigation into portion sizes and nutritional content of takeaway chips in Brent

BACKGROUND

Childhood obesity is of particular concern in Brent with 24% of year 6 students classified as obese, compared to 19% nationally. Access to fast food, portion sizes and foods that are energy dense and high in fat are all contributors to the complex issue of obesity. Trans fats are also a concern, as they can be found in certain vegetable oils used for frying and are associated with Coronary Heart Disease and all-cause mortality.

A study of Brent secondary school students' takeaway habits showed that students who go to schools within 400m of takeaway outlets are more likely to eat takeaways at lunchtime, after school and with their families. Takeaways accounted for 12% of lunches and on average 50% of students ate takeaways at least once a week on their way home from school (62% at schools within 400m of outlets). Chips were by far the most popular food purchased (79%) and fizzy drinks were regularly consumed with takeaways (66%).

Evidence has shown that education alone is not effective in reducing takeaway consumption. Local Authorities have a vital role to play in promoting access to healthy food through policy development, planning and working alongside local communities.

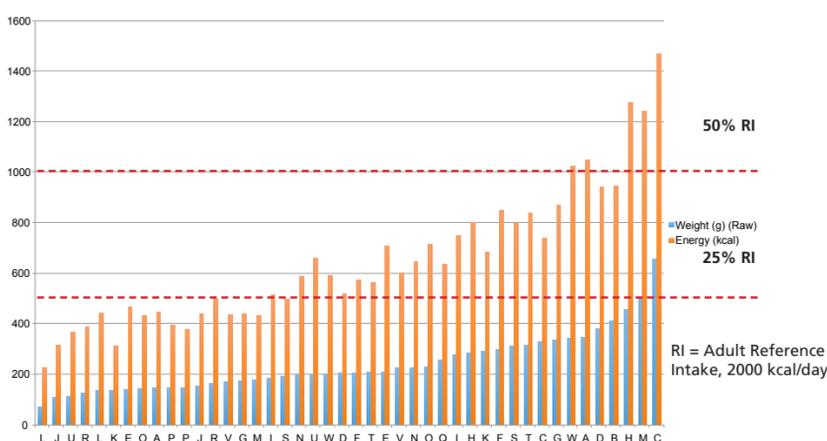
INTERVENTION

AIM: To provide evidence that portion size and nutritional content of chips impact on the health of secondary school students in Brent.

METHOD: To collect samples of small and large chip portions from 23 takeaway stores located in close proximity to secondary schools in Brent. Each takeaway sampled included an investigation into oil type, chip cut, salt added, frying practices and packaging used. All samples were nutritionally analysed for energy, fat (incl. saturated and trans fats) and salt content. Sample selection was based on a range of factors including; proximity to secondary schools, deprivation and popularity of outlets.

RESULTS

CHIP PORTIONS – ENERGY AND WEIGHT



TRANS FATS



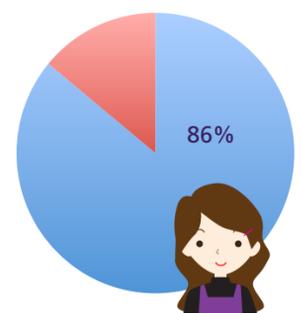
PACKAGING

AVERAGE PORTION SIZE: A COMPARISON OF PACKAGING

	BOX	PAPER BAG	POLYSTYRENE	WEDGE	Food Standards agency (FSA) Recommended portions
Small	181g	161g	261g	n/a	100g
Large	356g	269g	484g	147g	200g



A single large portion sampled in Brent contributed as high as 86% of a 10-11 year old sedentary girl's daily energy allowance



DISCUSSION

Chips being sold by takeaway outlets in Brent are contributing to the obesogenic environment. A single large portion sampled in Brent contributed as high as 86% of a 10-11 year old sedentary girl's daily energy allowance, and more than a third of the outlets sampled served small portions greater than 25% of an adult's recommended intake.

It is recommended:

- INCREASE CHIP CUT SIZE** Takeaway outlets should aim to achieve a minimum of 13mm thickness in line with HCC recommendations. If customer satisfaction is a concern, outlets should consider increasing thickness incrementally.
- REDUCE PORTION SIZES** Takeaway outlets should aim to meet Food Standards Agency recommendations for small and large portion sizes of 100g and 240g consecutively. To achieve this, packaging type and size should be considered e.g. from box to wedge
- HEALTHIER OIL TYPE** Takeaway outlets should refrain from using partially hydrogenated vegetable oils to minimise consumption trans fats. Alternatively outlets should consider oils low in trans and saturated fats such as liquid Rapeseed, Sunflower and Corn Oils.

- HEALTHIER FRYING PRACTICES** Takeaway outlets should ensure the 'shake, tap, hang' technique is implemented to reduce fat content and therefore energy density.
- Increased public awareness of hydrogenated oils and their health implications is needed

CONCLUSION

Obesity and related diseases are of grave concern in Brent. There are a significant number of takeaway outlets within close proximity to schools, particularly in the most deprived areas of the borough. Secondary school students in Brent are also more likely to consume takeaways if their school is within 400m of outlets.

This investigation highlights that on average chip portions in the borough are large and energy dense. Supporting outlets to reduce portion sizes, improve oil types, increase chip cut size and use healthier frying practices, could therefore play a vital role in reducing energy consumption and have significant health implications.

Full investigation report can be found at www.brent.gov.uk

