



Feeding America's Community Health and Nutrition

The Power of Nudges: Making Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

Potential nudge interventions for Foods to Encourage* (F2E) at food pantries:

1. Recipe card placement near F2E items

- **Settings:** WIC Clinics | Grocery Stores
- Having recipes that include fresh produce leads low-income mothers to serve more fresh fruits and vegetables (Birmingham, Schulz and Edlefsen). This is because having access to the recipe leads them to be more confident that they will be able to use the produce. More than 40% of supermarket shoppers would like to be given healthy recipes in the store (FMI).

Birmingham, B., J. A. Shultz and M. Edlefsen. Evaluation of a Five-a-Day Recipe Booklet for Enhancing the Use of Fruits and Vegetables in Low-Income Households. *Journal of Community Health* 29(2004):45-62.

Food Marketing Institute. *Helping Shoppers Overcome the Barriers to Choosing Healthful Foods*, 2010.

2. Suggesting an amount to help normalize a behavior of taking more F2E

- **Settings:** Grocery Stores
- Signs informing clients that the average family takes 5 produce items increases produce takings by more than 10%. Signs were placed inside of shopping carts facing the client. Signs included some positive imaging (a happy face, with a thumbs up sign). By indicating how much others take, the signs create a social norm. Individuals who take less feel they should increase their takings. However, we must also worry about people who already choose more than 5 choosing less. This can be avoided by including positive reinforcement regarding the decision to choose more. In this case, we have included the thumbs up sign, associating the choice of produce with something positive.

Payne, Collin R., Mihai Niculescu and David R. Just. "Shopper Marketing Nutrition Interventions." *Physiology and Behavior*, forthcoming.

* F2E is Feeding America's approach to estimate the nutritional contributions of food categories in food banks' inventories.

3. Pairing F2E items to create a package meal idea (to help consumers know how to pair more F2E together and make a meal idea simple) aka bundling food

- **Settings:** Lunch Rooms | Restaurants | Grocery Stores
- When foods are bundled together for convenience, up to 18% more will take the bundled food – even if the bundled food is relatively healthier. This can also result in up to a 25% reduction in consumption of unbundled less healthy items (Hanks et al., 2012). This is true even when there is no price advantage for the bundled foods. Consumers view this bundling as a social norm and thus value the bundled food more than they would if the foods were not bundled together (Sharpe and Staelin, 2010).

Hanks, A. S., Just, D. R., Smith, L. E., & Wansink, B. Healthy convenience: nudging students toward healthier choices in the lunchroom. *Journal of Public Health* 34(2012):370-376.

Sharpe, K.S., R. Staelin. Consumption Effects of Bundling: Consumer Perceptions, Firm Actions and Public Policy Implications. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 29(2010):170-188.

Food Marketing Institute. Helping Shoppers Overcome the Barriers to Choosing Healthful Foods, 2010.

4. Appearance of abundance

- **Settings:** Stay Tuned!
- Placing produce in containers/displays that make it appear there is a plentiful supply of the item. This is an intervention currently on the frontier of research both in the food pantry context as well as in other settings. Current and future work aims to explore the effect of the appearance of abundance on individuals' nutrition choices. Stay tuned!

5. Signs for priming

- **Settings:** Grocery Stores
- Placing material that highlights specific attributes of a particular item (posters, floor arrows, shopping cart placards, etc.) at strategic locations: waiting areas, bottlenecks, pathways. These work to increase an item's salience and prime individuals for when they are presented the opportunity to select the item. Content on the sign may communicate a social norm, highlight the desirability of the item with an appealing image, or simply direct the individual towards the good. Floor arrows were found to increase sales of fruit and vegetables by 9% (Payne et al., working paper). Placards within grocery carts led to a 16% increases in produce purchases (Payne et al., 2015).

Payne, C. R., Niculescu, M., Just, D. R., & Kelly, M. P. (2015). Shopper marketing nutrition interventions: Social norms on grocery carts increase produce spending without increasing shopper budgets. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 2, 287-291.

Payne CR, Niculescu M, Just DR, Kelly M. Social norms in the grocery store: increasing fruit and vegetable purchases without increasing budgets. Working Paper.

6. Front & center product placement

- **Settings:** Lunch Rooms
- Placing produce in a prominent location where it is easily reached and seen can increase the selection of produce by more than 100% (Just and Wansink). This has been confirmed in multiple settings including grocery stores, bodegas and convenience stores. Just placing an item first in a line can increase takings by more than 11% relative to other places in the line. Finding a way to make healthy foods more prominent and attractive, for example, by placing produce in an attractive bowl or basket, goes a long way toward reminding clients of just how good that orange or apple can be. Placing a fruit item on two separate locations on the line can increase takings in some cases by more than 300%. The first time a fruit appears it may trigger a latent desire to eat the fruit, but by the time the individual realizes the desire they may have passed the item. But they will be ready the second time.

Just, David R., and Brian Wansink. "Smarter Lunchrooms: Using Behavioral Economics to Improve Meal Selection." *Choices* Vol. 24 No. 3 (2009).

Wansink, B. and D. R. Just Healthy Foods First: Students take the First Lunchroom Food 11% More Often than the Third. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* 43(2011):S8.