

The Development and Evaluation of a Portion Plate for Youth: A Pilot Study

Goals

These researchers aimed to develop a specially-designed dining plate, called “Nutri-plate”, that would encourage kids to make healthier food choices, to visualize portion sizes, and to reinforce messages about eating better. The plate was tested out with youth to see if it would influence what and how much kids ate.

Methods

- Sixteen (16) kids participated: most were low-income and African-American, and more than half were obese.
- Half of the participants helped the researchers to brainstorm plate designs that would promote healthy food choices.
- To test out the plates, participants attended two dining sessions where the amount and type of food that they ate was measured. Outcomes were compared between those who used the Nutri-plate versus those using a plain plate.

Key Findings

- Kids suggested that a specially-designed dining plate should include simple information about healthy eating, and that it should be colorful and “fun”.
- Kids said that they liked being told where to put their food on their plate, and recommended that portion sizes for each food group be included in the final design.
- During testing, both the kids using Nutri-plate and those using a plain plate chose about 2/3 healthy foods, but kids using the Nutri-plate took less food overall.
- Nutri-plate users selected more fruit than kids using plain plates.
- Researchers found that kids with higher BMIs made more healthy food choices when using the Nutri-plate.

Key Results

Findings from this project suggest that it may be possible influence food choices among kids by using educational, youth-designed dining ware that reinforces healthy messages.

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A copy of the full article will be published in a future issue of the Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior.