

The impact of interventions to promote healthier ready-to-eat meals (to eat in, to take away, or to be delivered) sold by specific food outlets open to the general public: a systematic review.

Running title: Promoting healthier food outlet meals

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AA, JA, VAS, AAL, HM, CS and MW devised the concept for the research. CS was responsible for the management of the study. CS, FHB, TB, HM and AAL developed the study protocol and methods, with contributions from AA, JA, MW, VAS and CA. HM and FHB conducted the searches. FHB conducted the screening with assistance from HM, CS and AAL. All authors assisted with data extraction. TB, FHB, CS and AR conducted the data validation and TB, FHB and CS conducted the data analysis. TB, FHB, CS, CA, AA, JA, VAS and MW contributed to the interpretation of results. CA and VAS provided specialised advice (behaviour change theory). FHB, TB and CS drafted the manuscript. All authors have provided critical comments on drafts of the manuscript and have read and approved the final version.

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Abstract

Introduction: Ready-to-eat meals sold by food outlets that are accessible to the general public are an important target for public health intervention. We conducted a systematic review to assess the impact of such interventions.

Methods: Studies of any design and duration that included any consumer or food outlet-level before-and-after data were included.

Results: Thirty studies describing 34 interventions were categorised by type and coded against the Nuffield intervention ladder: *Restrict choice* = trans-fat law (n=1), changing pre-packed children's meal content (n=1), food outlet award schemes (n=2). *Guide choice* = price increases for unhealthier choices (n=1), incentive (contingent reward) (n=1), price decreases for healthier choices (n=2). *Enable choice* = signposting (highlighting healthier/unhealthier options) (n=10), telemarketing (offering support for the provision of healthier options to businesses via telephone) (n=2). *Provide information* = calorie labelling law (n=12), voluntary nutrient labelling (n=1), personalised receipts (n=1). Most interventions were aimed at adults in US fast-food chains and assessed customer-level outcomes. More 'intrusive' interventions which restricted or guided choice generally showed a positive impact on food outlet and customer level outcomes. However, interventions which simply provided information or enabled choice had a negligible impact.

Conclusion: Interventions to promote healthier ready-to-eat meals sold by food outlets should restrict choice or guide choice through incentives/disincentives. Public

health policies and practice which simply involve providing information are unlikely to be effective.

Word count 200

Background

Ready-to-eat meals (to eat in, to take away, or to be delivered) sold by specific food outlets that sell ready-to-eat meals as their main business, are often more energy dense and nutrient poor compared with meals prepared and eaten at home.¹ Furthermore, the consumption of these ready-to-eat meals is associated with higher energy and fat, and lower micronutrient intake.² Eating takeaway or fast-food is associated with excess weight gain and obesity.^{3, 4}

The popularity and availability of ready-to-eat meals has risen considerably over the last few decades in many high and middle income countries.⁵⁻⁷ For example, around one fifth to one quarter of the UK population eat takeaway meals at home at least once per week.⁷ There is some evidence that food outlets selling takeaway meals and fast-foods are clustered in areas of socio-economic deprivation.⁸ Ready-to-eat meals sold by food outlets, particularly in deprived areas, are therefore an important target for public health intervention.⁹

In some countries, national and local government health departments have worked with national and regional food outlet chains to promote healthier ready-to-eat meals. Many of these interventions have used 'health by stealth' approaches, such as

reformulation (particularly salt reduction, the removal of trans fats, and energy reductions), and removing condiments from tables in sit-in eateries. Other interventions have focused on promoting smaller portion sizes and providing consumers with better nutritional information (for example calorie labelling on menus).¹⁰

Bowen et al¹¹ recently completed a critical literature review, guided by a socioecological framework, on the effects of different types of environmental and policy interventions on healthy eating, from a US perspective. They concluded that, whilst the evidence reviewed did not support menu labelling as an effective strategy to change purchasing patterns, additional strategies to enhance menu-labelling practices, and strategies beyond labelling (including implementation of nutritional standards), may be useful. The authors concluded that this literature requires further review.

The aim of this evidence synthesis was therefore to systematically review the international literature on the impact^a of interventions to promote healthier ready-to-eat meals (to eat in, to take away, or to be delivered) sold by specific food outlets accessible to the general public.

^a Impact in this paper is used to describe change in an outcome of interest associated with an intervention. In uncontrolled before-and-after (or pre/post) studies, impact was assessed as the change in the outcome of interest from baseline to post intervention. In randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and non-RCTs, impact was assessed as the difference in change in the outcome of interest in the intervention group compared with the controls. Of note, where we report impact, we do so alongside the methodological quality of the study (strong, moderate, or weak); studies without a control could only achieve a quality assessment of moderate or weak. We appreciate that impact results from uncontrolled studies should be treated with caution (e.g. http://handbook.cochrane.org/chapter_21/21_4_assessment_of_study_quality_and_risk_of_bias.htm). The absence of a comparison group makes it impossible to know what would have happened without the intervention. Some of the particular problems with interpreting data from uncontrolled studies include susceptibility to problems with confounding (including seasonality) and regression to the mean.

For the purposes of this review, we have defined ready-to-eat meals as complete meals that need no further preparation which are bought from food outlets, to eat in, to take away, or to be delivered. For example, a bought sandwich or salad box would be included in this definition. However, a packet of crisps/potato chips and a drink, or a chocolate bar, would not be considered a ready-to-eat meal, even if the person consuming them was doing so in replacement of a meal. We acknowledge that terminology in this field is challenging. The literature in this field often includes references to 'take-aways', 'fast food' and 'out of home eating'. In the US, the term 'take-out meals' is often used, and in Australia they speak of 'meals prepared outside the home'. In the absence of a globally agreed definition, we have used the term 'ready-to-eat meals' throughout, and it includes 'take-aways', 'fast food', 'out of home eating', 'take-out meals', and 'meals prepared outside the home'.

Methods

The systematic review was undertaken using established methods based on those used by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)¹² and the findings are reported according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines.¹³ The review is registered with the International prospective register of systematic reviews (PROSPERO) (registration no. CRD42013006931) and the protocol is published.¹⁴

Inclusion criteria:

Setting: The specific food outlets we included were those that, as their main business, sold ready-to-eat meals, and were openly accessible to the general public. Supermarkets and general food stores selling ready-to-eat meals (e.g. salad boxes

and sandwiches) were not included, but cafes and restaurants within supermarkets and other retail stores selling ready-to-eat meals were. Food outlets that provided ready-to-eat meals free of charge (e.g. community based lunch clubs for the elderly or homeless) were excluded. We also excluded food outlets which are not openly accessible to the general public, including those based in schools, universities, workplaces, and health/social care institutions. This was for two reasons: first, the effects of interventions to promote the sale of healthier meals in these environments have previously been reviewed.^{15 16 17} Second, the relationship between the provider (e.g. on behalf of the education authority or employer) and consumer (e.g. student or employee) of ready-to-eat meals in these institutions is somewhat different to that between a business and the general public (e.g. the meals may be subsidised).

Interventions: Any type of intervention that aimed to change the practices of food outlets in order to promote healthier menu offerings was included. Interventions identified for review were assessed for type of intervention; 11 categories were identified. Box 1 describes each type of intervention category as defined by the review team and, for convenience, they are ordered by where they sit on the Nuffield ladder¹⁸ (described below). Interventions which were categorised as ‘Signposting’ type studies were defined as those that highlighted to customers the healthier, or less healthy, menu options available. This was usually done using symbols next to menu items, but table signage and posters were other methods used. Signposting differs from calorie labelling on menus as it provides some indication of the ‘healthfulness’ of a menu items rather than just providing information. Interventions which were categorised as ‘Telemarketing of healthy food choices’ type studies were defined as those which involved a phone-based direct marketing strategy and a

variety of free services offered to businesses including menu guidelines for the provision of healthy choices.

Box 1. Summary description of the intervention categories

Intervention category and description of interventions identified by review	Nuffield intervention ladder definition ^a
Trans-fat law: Restriction of all food service establishments, including both chain and non-chain food outlets, from using, storing, or serving food that contains partially hydrogenated vegetable oil and has a total of 0.5 g or more trans-fat per serving	<i>Restrict choice</i>
Changing pre-packed children's meal content: Pre-packed meal content changed to include healthier options, smaller portion sizes of less healthy options and/or removal of other less healthy options	<i>Restrict choice</i>
Food outlet award schemes: Interventions that include an assessment of food outlet practice(s) using pre-defined criteria, together with some sort of accreditation if the food outlet met the criteria	<i>Restrict choice (Variable depending on scheme, but those included in this review were all categorised as restrict choice)</i>
Price increases for unhealthier choices: Price increase applied to less healthy menu options	<i>Guide choice (disincentives)</i>
Incentive (contingent reward): A conditional reward is provided only after the target behaviour (e.g. choice of a healthier option) is performed	<i>Guide choice (incentives)</i>
Price reductions for healthier choices: Price reduction applied to healthier menu options	<i>Guide choice (incentives)</i>
Signposting: Interventions that highlighted to customers the healthier, or less healthy, menu options available	<i>Enable choice</i>
Telemarketing of healthy food choices: Phone-based direct marketing strategy; variety of free services offered to businesses including menu guidelines for the provision of healthy choices.	<i>Enable choice</i>
Calorie labelling law: Mandatory posting of calorie values of each option on menus in chain food outlets	<i>Provide information</i>
Voluntary calorie labelling: Voluntary posting of calorie values of each option on menus in chain food outlets	<i>Provide information</i>
Personalised receipts: Receipts that included personalised suggestions designed to reduce fat and calorie consumption	<i>Provide information</i>

^aDefinition from the Nuffield ladder¹⁸ starting with the most intrusive; eliminate choice, restrict choice, guide choice (disincentives), guide choice (incentives), guide choice (default policy), enable choice, provide information, do nothing),

Outcomes: Any outcome that included consumer or food outlet outcomes. Consumer outcomes could include dietary outcomes (e.g. energy intake), purchasing behaviour (e.g. sales data), and attitudes towards healthier menu choice and preferences. Food outlet outcomes could include changes in retail practices, process outcomes and profit.

Study design: A scoping search of the literature, which we conducted in advance of writing the protocol¹⁴ estimated that there would be insufficient evidence from randomised controlled trials (RCTs) to allow us to answer our research question. However, those working in public health policy and practice need to know how best to improve the nutritional quality of ready-to-eat meals sold by food outlets. Thus, we took an overarching approach that is used by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence,¹² to identify the best available evidence. Thus, studies of any study design that reported outcomes at least once pre and once post-intervention were included (also called uncontrolled before and after studies). Studies with and without comparators were included without restriction on the type of comparator.

Search

Searches identified studies published from January 1993 to October 2015 in the following databases (and interfaces): ASSIA (ProQuest), CINAHL (Ebscohost), Embase (Ovid), MEDLINE (Ovid), NHS EED (Wiley Cochrane) and PsycINFO

(Ebscohost). Searches were limited to articles written in English. Topic experts were contacted for information about any additional relevant interventions not identified by the electronic search. Key reviews¹⁹⁻²¹ were searched as well as reference lists of included studies. Details of the search strategies can be found in the Supplementary File, Fig S1.

Initial screening of titles and abstracts were conducted by one reviewer (FHB) with a random 10% of the sample independently screened by a second reviewer (HM). Agreement between the reviewers was fair ($\kappa = 0.50$) as a result of the second reviewer being more inclusive than the main reviewer. Disagreements between the reviewers were resolved through discussion and it was agreed that studies initially excluded by the main reviewer and included by the second reviewer were excluded at this stage. Full-text articles of potentially relevant studies were independently appraised by two researchers (FHB and CS). Agreement between the reviewers at this stage was excellent ($\kappa = 0.80$). Any disagreements between reviewers were resolved by discussion.

Data extraction and quality assessment

Data extraction and quality assessment were conducted independently by two reviewers (all authors contributed), and any discrepancies between reviewers were resolved through discussion with a third reviewer (TB). Data were extracted on study characteristics, intervention type and outcomes. Study quality was assessed using the Effective Public Health Practice Project Quality Assessment Tool for Quantitative Studies²² as recommended by the Cochrane Public Health Review Group²³. This

was adapted for the purposes of this review, specifically in terms of the classification of study designs (see Table 1).

Table 1 Adapted typology of study designs and quality about here

Data on implementation, including context, collaboration, fidelity, sustainability and differential effects by population demographics (using the PROGRESS [place of residence, race/ethnicity/culture/language, occupation, gender/sex, religion, education, socioeconomic status, and social capital] framework²⁴) were extracted, using a checklist for obesity related interventions²⁵ adapted from workplace interventions.²⁶ An implementation score (0-10) was assigned based on the number of categories information was reported for. Any cost effectiveness data were also extracted.

Data were extracted on the theoretical framework or behavioural model or strategy underpinning each intervention. Interventions were coded according to the Nuffield Intervention ladder in order to categorise the interventions in terms of their “intrusiveness” and impingement on personal autonomy.¹⁸ We note that the Nuffield Ladder uses the term ‘incentive’ loosely. Incentive has been technically defined to mean a reward contingent on changing behaviour, which can be distinguished from a simple price increase or decrease.^{27, 28} We have made these distinctions explicit in our intervention categories. Interventions were also coded in terms of intervention function and policy category using the Behaviour Change Wheel.²⁹

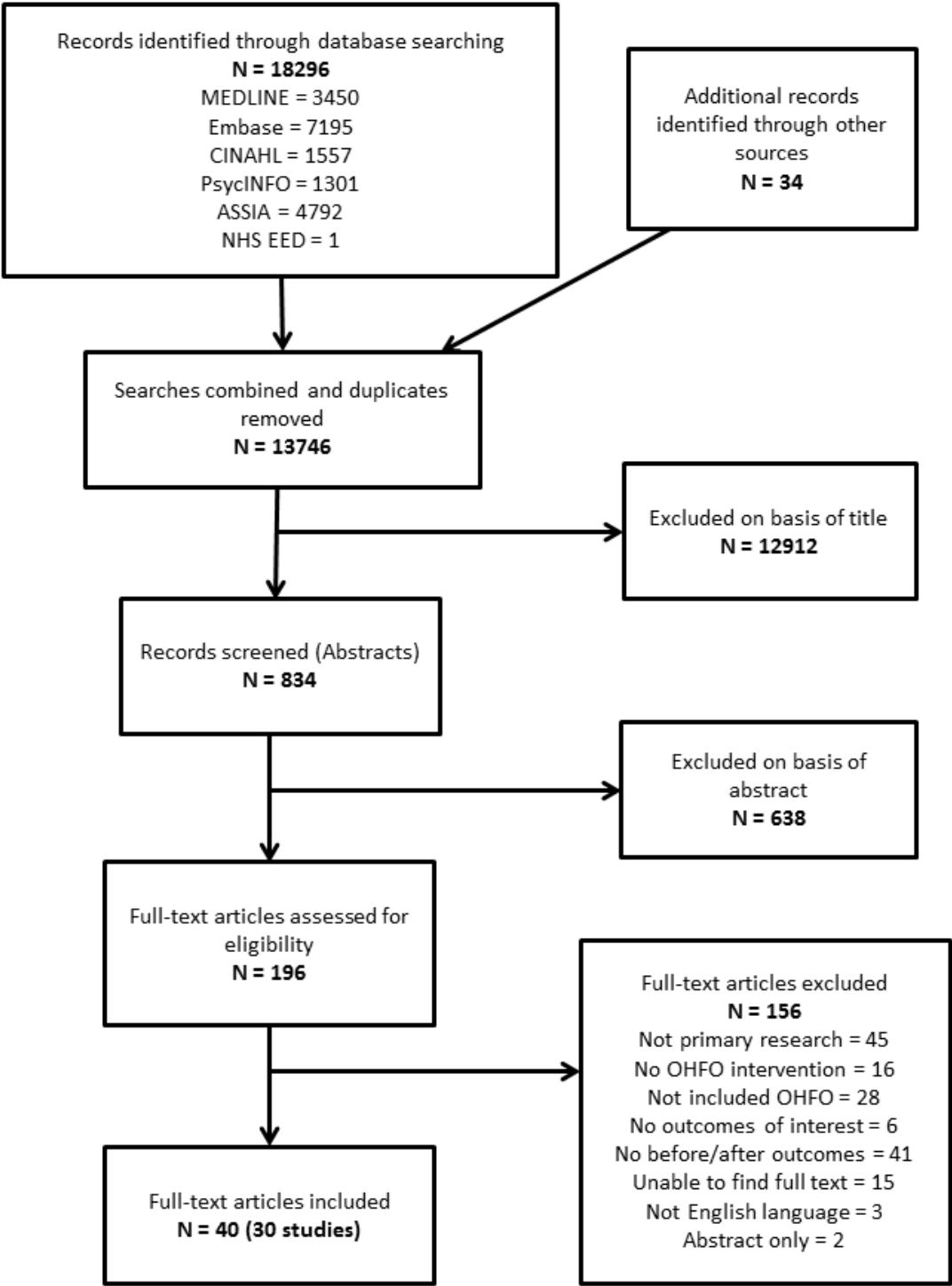
Data synthesis

Given heterogeneity in study designs, intervention types and outcome measures, the results are presented as a narrative synthesis following the ESRC Narrative Synthesis Guidance.³⁰ A 'summary impact' of each study was reported (denoted by an arrow), alongside the global rating of study quality (strong, moderate, or weak). Studies were classed as 'effective' (↑); 'equally effective' as the comparison group (↔); 'effectiveness mixed' by outcome or gender (↓); or 'not effective' (↓). Studies without a control could only achieve a global quality of moderate or weak. Impact was based on change in mean energy purchased where possible (where a decrease in mean energy purchased signified a successful outcome of the intervention, denoted as ↓). Where energy purchased was not reported, impact was based on the primary outcome of the study (e.g. trans fat content of meal, healthy food purchases, catering practices, health promotion practices, or menu items available). Impact was assessed using the overall effect for the whole study sample and not by subgroup. Studies with a control group were assessed on change in outcomes between groups at follow-up; studies without a control group were assessed on change in outcomes from baseline to follow-up.

Results

A total of 30 studies (reported in 40 articles), describing 34 interventions, were included; study flow is reported in a PRISMA flowchart (Figure 1). Supplementary file Table

S1 provides a list of included references. Details of studies that were excluded on screening full-text articles are listed in Supplementary file Table S2.



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Characteristics of included studies

Study characteristics are summarised in Supplementary File Table S3. Of the 30 included studies, 19 were repeat cross-sectional studies, seven with a comparison control group³¹⁻³⁷ and 12 without.³⁸⁻⁴⁹ These studies were classified as cross-sectional because the outcomes of the study were mainly measured at the consumer level, so although the same food outlets were assessed at each time point, the customers were most likely to be different. In three of these studies^{33, 44, 49} there were subgroup cohorts of customers nested within the repeat cross-sectional data. Five studies⁵⁰⁻⁵⁴ were classified as cohort studies. Two studies were controlled before-after studies that reported outcomes in the same customers⁵⁵ or at the food outlet level in the same food outlets at baseline and follow-up,⁵⁶ and four studies were controlled trials.⁵⁷⁻⁶⁰

Twenty-seven of the 30 included studies were based in the USA; two studies were based in Australia,^{44, 49} and one in the UK.⁵⁰ Twenty-two studies reported outcomes for adults; three for parents and their children^{37, 55, 61} and one study reported child outcomes only.⁴⁸ For the four remaining studies, food outlets, rather than individuals, were the unit of observation and analysis. Study populations ranged from lower³⁴ to higher SES^{31, 41, 55, 58} and more ethnically diverse samples⁵⁷ to mainly Caucasian samples.^{39, 43, 45} Some studies targeted specific ethnic groups, including Mexican Americans,⁵³ low-income African-Americans⁵⁹ and low-income Latino-Americans.⁴⁶ Many of the studies did not report on population characteristics in detail.

In terms of the types of food outlets targeted; 18 studies focused on chain food outlets and 12 studies were set in other types of food outlet; including three studies

in non-chain food outlets;^{45, 47, 60} and one study each in takeaway food outlets;⁵⁹ a delicatessen-style food outlet;⁵⁸ privately owned fast-food-style Mexican food outlets;⁵³ community food outlets which included both counter and table-service;⁴² Latino family-owned food outlets;⁴⁶ licensed retail food outlets;⁵² licenced hotels, clubs and nightclubs;⁴⁹ restaurants and cafes;⁴⁴ and small independent catering outlets.⁵⁰ Most of the chain food outlets were fast-food counter-service, but other food outlet types included table-service or take-away only. One study was set in food service areas of a large discount department store.⁴¹

Study samples of food outlets varied greatly in size, for example one study included just one outlet⁵⁸, and another included over 300.³¹ Study duration ranged from minutes⁵⁴ to seven years³⁷ and data points ranged from two time points³⁴ to weekly purchase information for a 125-week period.³²

Only four studies were assigned a global quality rating of 'strong', ten were rated as 'moderate' and 16 were rated 'weak' (Supplementary File Table S4). In terms of implementation, scores ranged from 3 to 9 (Supplementary File Table S6). Papers that described the study intervention in detail were more likely to score higher for implementation; however, low scores were not necessarily an indication of poor reporting just that a number of organisational and implementation factors were not used or explored for the intervention (e.g. theoretical underpinning, collaborative approaches to development and delivery, fidelity of intervention delivery, stakeholder support).

Tables 2a (for studies with customer level outcomes) and 2b (for studies with food outlet level outcomes) summarise the design, intervention type, context, and results for the included studies. Where a study included more than one intervention arm, the results for each have been reported separately (often in different intervention types). Some of the interventions focused on changing customer behaviour directly (e.g. signposting); and some on changing outlet behaviour in an attempt to change customer behaviour (e.g. awards). For more detailed information on study interventions see Supplementary File Table S4, and for study results see Supplementary File Table S5.

***Tables 2a Summary of included studies with customer level outcomes (n=23)
and 2b Summary of included studies with food outlet level outcomes (n=7)
about here***

Studies with customer level outcomes

Trans fat law (n=1)

Only one study (moderate quality, repeat cross-sectional) investigated the effects of the trans fat law introduced in New York City. Trans fat law was associated with a significant reduction in trans fat content per purchase along with a small, but significant, increase in saturated fat content per purchase. Results did not differ according to the poverty rate of the neighbourhood in which the food outlet was located. However, the effect of the law was inconsistent and varied between fast-food chain types.

Changing pre-packed children's meal content (n=1)

One repeat cross-sectional study (weak quality) investigated the effects of changing the side items included (decrease in portion size of fries and addition of apple slices) in pre-packed children's meals on energy purchased from these meals.⁴⁸ The intervention also included a slight change to in-restaurant and television promotions to include non-fat chocolate milk in addition to 1% fat plain milk. The study found a decrease in total energy purchased, which was mainly explained by the reduction in energy due to the change in side items. Sales of non-fat chocolate milk also increased, and sales of regular carbonated drinks decreased from baseline to follow-up, which resulted in a small but significant contribution to the overall decrease in energy. Of note, there was no change in the percentage of customers choosing the lowest energy option. Whilst there did not appear to be any compensatory effects in terms of other pre-packed meal components, compensatory effects in terms of additional foods were not reported.

Price increases for unhealthy choices (n=2)

One strong quality, controlled trial investigated the effects of two interventions that included price increases of unhealthy menu items: 1) price increase alone and 2) price increase with signposting of the unhealthy options.⁶⁰ The study found no intervention effect when only a price increase was applied, but when combined with signposting there was a decrease in unhealthy main dishes ordered.⁶⁰

Incentives (contingent rewards) (n=1)

A moderate quality, brief, cohort study investigated the effects of offering a non-food incentive (entry to a \$10, \$50 or \$100 lottery) with a smaller portion size option.⁵⁴ Customers who had intended to order a full sized sandwich were offered a half sized

sandwich plus lottery option (at the same price of the full sized sandwich). The proportion of customers who changed their menu choice from a full sized to a half sized sandwich varied by the size of the lottery prize from 5% (\$10 lottery), 8% (\$50 lottery) to 22% (\$100 lottery).⁵⁴

Price reductions for healthier choices (n=2)

One weak quality, controlled study investigated the effects of two price reduction interventions to promote purchases of healthier options: 1) price reduction alone and 2) price reduction alongside health promotion techniques to highlight the healthier options to customers). Both interventions resulted in a proportional increase in sales of healthier items compared to other items.⁵⁸

Signposting (n=8)

Eight studies investigated the effects of nine interventions that involved signposting. In three studies signposting was implemented alone^{41, 46, 60}; in two studies signposting was incorporated with menu changes^{45, 59}, and three studies were of health promotion or social marketing campaigns which included signposting.^{31, 42, 58}

One controlled trial (strong quality), found that, overall, adding a symbol to menus that identified 'unhealthy' main dishes resulted in a decrease in the number of unhealthy main dishes ordered.⁶⁰ However, when gender effects were explored, it was found that this effect was driven predominately by women.

A repeat cross-sectional study (weak quality) showed that sales of some healthier items increased after the addition of 'healthy' signposting, but for some, sales

decreased or were not affected, resulting in no significant overall change in sales of all 'healthy' items.⁴¹ However, study authors report that the items that showed decreased sales may have been prone to seasonal effects. Another repeat cross-sectional study (weak quality) found no effect of healthy signposting on the purchase of healthy main meals when added to an existing award intervention.⁴⁶ This intervention was also culturally tailored; Latino community members helped to translate the messages on small menu stickers into Spanish and provided specific examples of culturally used saturated fats and other ingredients to tailor the national dietary guidelines.

Two studies investigated effects of signposting plus menu changes. One controlled trial (strong quality) found that an intervention promoting new healthier choices was effective in increasing sales of healthy food items.⁵⁹ However, a repeat cross-sectional study (weak quality) found that an intervention of table signage promoting new alternative healthier options had no effect on the purchase of healthy choices.⁴⁵ In the first study,⁵⁹ food outlets were given support with monetary value in the form of initial stock. In addition, both the menu items and intervention materials aimed to be culturally appropriate through formative research with African-American customers and building rapport with the Korean-American and African-American takeaway owners, for example by using and learning greetings in Korean.

Four studies investigated the effects of interventions that primarily aimed to increase customer awareness of healthy options in the participating food outlets. As well as simple menu signposting these interventions used social marketing or health promotion campaigns to achieve this.^{31, 42, 53, 58} The intervention investigated by

Acharya and colleagues using a repeat cross-sectional design with control groups (moderate quality) found a significant, small effect on the purchase of healthy menu items compared with controls.³¹ Holders of campaign discount coupons were 17% more likely to purchase healthy menu items.

A weak quality repeat cross-sectional study investigated an intervention delivered in community food outlets that also included 'persuasion' intervention functions (advertisements and articles in local newspaper and newsletters, and promotional material).⁴² A trend towards a slight increase in the percentage of healthy items sold was observed but this did not reach significance. A culturally tailored social marketing campaign, conducted in Mexican American food outlets, which included the provision of guidelines and training to food outlet owners, incentives (for outlet staff and customers) and newspaper advertising, increased the number of healthier food options provided in the majority of the participating outlets (cohort study; weak quality).⁵³ In this study all materials were given to food outlet owners in English and Spanish, and were image-oriented, or comprised simple checklists. Finally, a weak quality, controlled trial found that displaying in-store posters listing healthier options led to increases in sales of the healthier options.⁵⁸

Calorie labelling law (n=10)

The highest number of studies (n=10) assessed the effects of mandatory calorie labelling on menus. Four of these assessed the King County nutrition labelling law;^{36, 39, 43, 55} four assessed the New York City calorie labelling law;^{33, 34, 40, 57} one study assessed the Philadelphia calorie labelling law³⁵ and one study assessed calorie labelling laws across 18 US states and localities.³⁷

473

474 One repeat cross-sectional study with control (rated strong for quality) showed a
475 statistically significant decrease in average energy purchased following menu calorie
476 labelling in one large coffee chain (Starbucks) compared to control.³³ One repeat
477 cross-sectional study (weak quality) described an increase in the number of
478 customers who reported seeing and acting on the calorie information following
479 introduction of mandatory menu labelling.³⁹ The remaining studies (one weak, five
480 moderate and one strong quality) reported no association between introduction of
481 mandatory menu calorie labelling and average energy purchased.^{34-37, 40, 43, 55}

482

483 One controlled study (moderate quality) investigated the effects of providing
484 customers with calorie recommendation information before and after the New York
485 City calorie labelling law was implemented.⁵⁷ The study found that calorie
486 recommendations did not significantly affect food purchases.

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488 **Voluntary calorie labelling (n=1)**

489 A moderate quality repeat cross-sectional study found that voluntary nutrient
490 (calories, fat, sodium and carbohydrates) labelling in non-chain food outlets resulted
491 in significant decreases in energy, fat and sodium content of customer purchases,
492 with no change in carbohydrate content⁴⁷. The study also found that 71% of
493 customers surveyed reported noticing the nutrition information, with 20% (of all
494 customers) stating that this resulted in choosing a lower energy main meal and 17%
495 reported ordering a lower fat main meal.

496

497 **Personalised receipts (n=1)**

One study (repeat cross-sectional; weak quality) assessed a receipt-based intervention.³² The receipts consisted of three components: information, motivation and recommendations. The personalised receipts were associated with an increase in healthier item substitutions that were encouraged by the messages, such as substituting ham for sausage in a breakfast sandwich, or substituting frozen yogurt for ice cream. However, there was no significant change in total energy or total fat per transaction. The intervention was also associated with a small increase in revenue (3.2%).

Studies with food outlet level outcomes

Award schemes (n=2)

Two studies explored the effects of award scheme type interventions where food outlets received some kind of recognition or certificate for meeting pre-defined criteria.^{50, 52} The criteria in each award scheme covered a range of intervention features and both included restricted choice (e.g. recipe reformulation, default healthy drinks with children's meals). Both studies followed cohort study designs (weak quality) and observed increases in healthier catering practices and healthy options available. However, Bagwell et al⁵⁰ found that only a small number of changes were needed for outlets to achieve the award.

Signposting (n=1)

One weak quality study investigated the effects of a social campaign which included the intervention team working with food outlets to encourage them to add, and signpost, healthier options to their menus.⁵³ The majority of food outlets changed practices either by simply distributing health education materials (94% of 16 food

outlets) or introducing or promoting healthier side options (81%), whilst half began promoting healthier main meal options.

Telemarketing of healthy food choices (n=2)

Two Australian studies^{44, 49} appear to be related to one telemarketing health promotion intervention which included an element of healthy food provision; with one paper focusing on outcomes for hotels, clubs and nightclubs⁴⁹ and the other paper on outcomes for restaurants and cafes.⁴⁴ Both studies used a repeat cross-sectional study design, with the same cohort of premises evaluated at both time points, and were rated weak for quality. Licata et al⁴⁴ found no significant change in the percentage of restaurants and cafes undertaking nutrition-related health promotion practices between 1997 and 2000, in either the cross-sectional or cohort samples. However, Wiggers et al⁴⁹ found the prevalence of healthy food choices increased significantly in hotels, clubs and nightclubs, in both cross-sectional and cohort samples.

Calorie labelling law (n=2)

Two studies investigated the effects of the King County, USA, calorie labelling law on food outlet level outcomes. In one cohort study (weak quality), there was a significant decrease in the energy content of main meals available in fast-food chain food outlets following the introduction of calorie labelling.⁵¹ One strong quality controlled study found no association between the introduction of mandatory menu calorie labelling and the 'healthfulness' of menus.⁵⁶

Analysis of theoretical framework / behavioural model

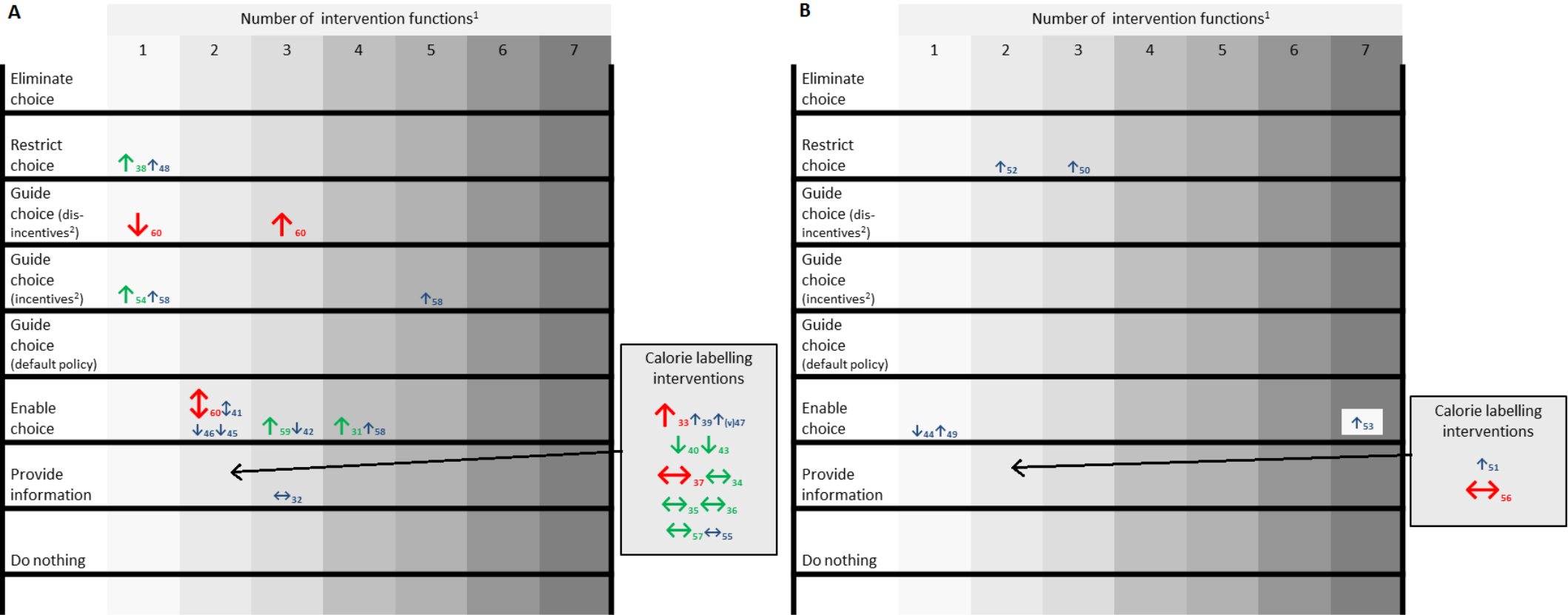
Only seven of the 30 studies reported using a theoretical framework or behavioural model; including a consumer behaviour model based on the Theory of Reasoned Action,³¹ an asset-based community development approach where community members are active agents of change,⁵³ participatory research⁴⁶ and creating 'supportive environments'.⁴⁹ One study⁵⁸ reported using the Health Belief Model, and a matching model,⁶² which predicts that, because the interval between food choice and eating is short, the proximal satisfaction of a tasty meal would prevail over the distal goal of good health.⁶³ Two studies^{45, 59} reported using Social Cognitive Theory; one of these studies also reported using a Social Marketing approach using the Four Ps: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion.⁵⁹ Our review protocol¹⁴ included plans to code the use of behaviour change techniques in included interventions, but this endeavour was abandoned *post hoc* because the necessary detail to allow us to do this was only available for seven interventions.^{31, 45, 46, 49, 53, 58, 59} Attempts were made to contact authors for further information, but only six authors responded to the requests (see Figure S1). This conclusion was arrived at by experts (VAS and CA) with considerable expertise in developing and coding behaviour change techniques in systematic reviews.

Figure 2 illustrates the findings from each intervention in the context of the intervention coding according to the Nuffield intervention ladder,¹⁸ and the number of intervention functions involved as coded from the Behaviour Change Wheel.²⁹ There is a cluster of interventions lower down the intervention ladder, particularly around providing information, and this mainly includes the calorie labelling law interventions. Evidence for these interventions from the lower end of the Nuffield ladder is mixed.

Evidence from the small number of studies higher up the intervention ladder

573 **Figure 2: Intervention impact summary by Nuffield intervention ladder category and number of intervention functions for**
 574 **customer level outcomes (A) and outlet level outcomes (B)**

575



Key: effective (↑); equally effective as the comparison group (↔); effectiveness mixed by outcome or gender (↕); not effective (↓) Red arrow = strong quality study, green arrow = moderate quality study, blue arrow = weak quality study

¹Intervention function coded from Michie et al (2011) Behaviour Change Wheel

²Incentive and dis-incentive are presented here as used in the Nuffield Ladder. Incentive includes both price reductions and contingent rewards. Disincentive includes price increases and contingent penalties.

suggests more consistent evidence of effectiveness. The only exception is seen when choices are guided through using price increases, where positive effects were only observed when in conjunction with other intervention elements (that sit further down the ladder). Overall, however, the number of intervention functions does not appear to influence intervention effectiveness.

Cost effectiveness of interventions

There was no cost-effectiveness evidence reported in any of the included studies.

Impact of intervention by PROGRESS

Eight studies reported on differential effects of the intervention by population demographics on purchasing behaviour, six of which focussed on the impact of calorie labelling. One high quality study of mandatory calorie labelling in Starbucks restaurants showed a larger decrease in energy per transaction in 'zip' codes with higher income and more educated residents.³³ This was also the only study of mandatory calorie labelling that showed a statistically significant decrease in terms of energy purchased post-labelling (approximately 15 calories per purchase). One study found a differential effect of calorie labelling by gender: women but not men significantly reduced mean energy purchased in coffee chains post labelling⁴³. Some evidence suggests that *awareness* of calorie labelling is highest amongst women and white, higher SES (income and education) and older adults.^{39, 40}

Two other studies also found differential effects by gender. In a study using a lottery incentive to encourage customers to choose a smaller portion size, women were less

likely to take up the offer. There were no effects by age, BMI or hunger level.⁵⁴ In another study, women appeared to respond strongly to signposting, whereas for men decreases in unhealthy items purchased were only found when a price increase was added to the signposting.⁶⁰

Overall, the limited evidence suggests there are no consistent differential effects (for better or worse) of mandatory calorie labelling in terms of food purchases by gender, age, race and SES. No studies reported data on differential effects of the intervention by occupation, culture/faith/religion, or social capital.

DISCUSSION

Summary of main findings

Thirty studies describing 34 interventions were identified which met the inclusion criteria. Most of these studies (n=27) only collected customer level outcome information. Indeed, the evidence is mainly from studies that collected data on meals purchased by adults buying food in specific fast-food chains within the USA, which limits the generalisability of the results. Information on the impact of interventions at a food outlet level was scarce and weak in quality. We did not find any information on the impact of interventions on food consumption, either by meal or total daily food intake. The quality of evidence was generally poor, with few high quality designs, which limits the strength of the results. Overall, the impact of interventions appears negligible and inconsistent. However, when the impact of interventions was assessed by the level of their intrusiveness^b, patterns emerged. The findings from

^b as defined by the Nuffield ladder¹⁸ starting with the most intrusive; eliminate choice, restrict choice, guide choice (disincentives), guide choice (incentives), guide choice (default policy), enable choice, provide information, do nothing),

this review provide useful insight from the best available evidence which will help to inform future policy and intervention efforts.

Four interventions focussed on restricting choice and all had a positive impact on customer level (n=2) and food outlet level (n=2) outcomes. These types of interventions are sometimes termed 'health by stealth', and there is good evidence that such interventions are effective and equitable.

Incentivisation, as defined in the Nuffield Ladder,¹⁸ may be a promising approach to encouraging the choice of healthier menu items. Two studies that used a price decrease for healthier options found positive effects on the purchase of healthier food items. Three of four interventions that included price decreases in addition to other intervention functions (targeted at customers and/or the food outlet) found positive effects on healthier food purchases. However, it is unclear what proportion of these positive effects can be attributed to the price changes in these studies. Price increases of unhealthy foods alone were ineffective overall but, when combined with signposting, resulted in a decrease in the purchase of unhealthy items. Eyles et al⁶⁴ have reviewed the literature around food pricing strategies and whether they encourage healthy eating habits. Based on modelling studies, they found that taxes on carbonated drinks and saturated fat and subsidies on fruits and vegetables would be associated with beneficial dietary change, with the potential for improved health. WHO have also concluded that there is the potential to influence consumer purchasing in the desired direction through price policies that address affordability and purchasing incentives; taxes on sugar sweetened beverages and targeted subsidies on fruit and vegetables emerge as the policy options with the greatest

potential to induce positive changes in consumption. Although there is a dearth of evidence around the effect of policy strategies which aim to promote healthier ready-to-eat meals, the results for pricing interventions observed in this review fit with the broader literature.⁶⁵

Signposting interventions showed mixed findings. Three signposting-only studies found mixed or no effect. Six signposting-plus other intervention components varied in effectiveness according to study quality. Studies assessed as moderate or strong quality tended to show positive intervention effects, whilst the weak quality studies tended to show no or mixed effects. Again, it is unclear what proportion of the effect in these studies can be attributed to the signposting-only component.

Calorie labelling appears to be associated with an increase in awareness (approximately half customers notice labels) and an increase in knowledge of the energy content of fast-food menu items. The proportion of customers that notice and act on calorie labelling do tend to purchase fewer calories, but this proportion remains low (less than a third), and no information was available on their subsequent purchases or the impact on overall energy intake.

Results suggest that it is the level of intrusiveness of an intervention, rather than the type of policy function, which determines the impact of the intervention. More 'intrusive' interventions (e.g. restrict choice, manipulate price) appear more effective than less intrusive interventions that simply include providing information and enabling choice (e.g. calorie labelling law).

Strengths and weaknesses of the studies included in the review

There was a dearth of high quality studies identified that met the inclusion criteria for this systematic review. The fact that most of the included studies were conducted in chain food outlets in the USA, focussed on customer level outcomes for adults only, and were of low to moderate in quality means that caution is required in generalising and interpreting the results. We appreciate that this type of real world public health evaluation is complex, but would encourage more researchers and funders to support this type of research, and when doing so to conduct evaluations which can provide information on the cost effectiveness and the equity impact of interventions. Although we included every type of outcome in this review, most of those reported were not direct measures of dietary intake or health. Some of the studies reported on the energy value count of food items purchased, but this may not necessarily translate into energy consumed (e.g. during to food sharing and waste), and it cannot be assumed that there were no compensatory effects in food intake at other times in the day. Data on food wastage, food sharing, or the act of keeping a proportion of the uneaten food for another meal (e.g. in a 'doggy bag') was not collected or reported in the studies we included for review; there is evidence that this is common practice, at least in the USA.⁶⁶

The difficulties in identifying behaviour change techniques employed in the studies included in this review may reflect two problems. First, descriptions of interventions in published reports are often poor. This means that the research identified is not replicable and offers limited options for evidence synthesis. This is a widely acknowledged problem⁶⁷ and has resulted in the development of the TIDieR guidelines for the reporting of interventions.⁶⁸ Second, because current taxonomies

of behaviour change techniques have been inspired by individual behaviour change interventions, it is possible that environmental interventions (e.g. changes to information provided in the menus), like the ones included in this review, are not as well reflected in these taxonomies, making coding difficult.

Strengths and weaknesses of the review

The primary strength of this systematic review is its scope, in that it assessed the international literature for evidence on this topic, without substantial restriction to any particular intervention, study design or outcome. This novel approach allowed us to comprehensively draw together the best available evidence relating to interventions which promote healthier ready-to-eat meals sold by specific food outlets open to the general public. This evidence base can contribute to local and national public health policy given the increasing consumption popularity of ready-to-eat meals and international cuisines in many countries.^{7, 69} That said, this resulted in the assembly of a heterogenous group of interventions which have a number of different targets for change; some intended to change food outlet practices and others aimed to change customer behaviour. Previous reviews have focused on calorie labelling^{19, 20, 70} or community-based interventions only.²¹ Our findings regarding the impact of calorie labelling on sales are in line with these recent systematic reviews^{19, 20, 70} which found inconsistent and negligible changes in 'real-world' food outlet settings. Two of these reviews^{19, 20} included experimental-type studies conducted in laboratory and training restaurants, which we did not include (because they were not open to the general public). Calorie labelling in these experimental (efficacy) studies was found to be efficacious. It would appear that these effects are not translated to 'real world' settings (effectiveness).

Meaning of the study: possible mechanisms and implications for practitioners and policymakers

We found a preponderance for interventions lower down the Nuffield Ladder – particularly in the provide information and enable choice ‘rungs’. This reflects the suggestion made by others that public health policymakers and practitioners may favour those interventions that are less intrusive.⁷¹ Unfortunately, our findings, and those of others,⁷¹⁻⁷⁴ suggest that these interventions are likely to be less effective and equitable than those higher up the ladder.

The Nuffield Ladder was originally developed to help public health practitioners and policymakers determine what level of intervention was ‘proportionate’ for a particular ‘problem’. ‘Intrusiveness’, evidence of effectiveness and the extent of the ‘problem’ addressed are all identified as being important considerations.¹⁸ Our findings suggest that interventions higher up the Nuffield Ladder are likely to be justified as ones lower down seem of limited effectiveness. We also found some evidence that price and incentive-based interventions may be particularly promising. However, overall there is very little evidence on interventions on ‘rungs’ above ‘enable choice’, and further effort is required both to develop and evaluate new approaches.

We also found evidence that less intrusive interventions lower down the Nuffield ladder were more likely to be associated with less equitable effects. The tendency for less intrusive interventions to be less equitable has been discussed by others.^{71, 75-78} Whilst this could be interpreted as a limitation, it also serves to highlight that different interventions are required for different population groups and that a range of

interventions are required to achieve change across the whole population.⁷¹

Although some interventions included in this review included a number of different components, we are not aware of any substantial, multi-sectorial attempts to achieve wholesale improvement in the healthfulness of the out-of-home food sector.

Whole system change across the out-of-home food sector would require concerted and joined up action across a range of private and public sector organisations. Such action is dependent on political will which is, in part, dependent on public perceptions of the seriousness of the problem addressed and the effectiveness of the solutions offered.⁷⁹ Recent changes in the public acceptability of, for example, smokefree legislation⁸⁰ and taxes on sugar sweetened beverages,⁸¹ suggest that public opinion on public health topics is amenable to change.

Unanswered questions and future research

We found limited evidence of interventions across the full spectrum described in the Nuffield Ladder. Further work is required to develop, and evaluate, a wider range of interventions, particularly those higher up the ladder that may be more effective and achieve more equitable effects. This should be conducted in partnership with those working in public health policy and practice.

The quality of evidence included in the review was generally low, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn. Those developing, delivering and evaluating interventions should make greater efforts to ensure that higher quality evaluations are conducted, particularly in terms of capturing longitudinal data on outcomes that can be directly related to diet and health. This may require focusing evaluative

774 resources on answering very specific questions well, rather than more diffuse
775 questions less well.⁸²⁻⁸⁴

776

777 We also found that many interventions were very poorly described. Guidance is now
778 available on describing interventions, and intervention components, to facilitate
779 replication and syntheses.^{68, 85} Researchers and journal editors should make greater
780 efforts to ensure more consistent use of these tools.

781

782 Finally, whilst we found some evidence of differential effects of interventions across
783 population sub-groups, such analyses were mostly absent. Many evaluation studies
784 may have been under-powered to explore such effects. However, there is good
785 theoretical, and growing empirical, evidence that some interventions – particularly
786 those lower down the Nuffield Ladder – are likely to be less effective in those with
787 fewer access to resources.^{71, 75-78} Researchers should consider where differential
788 effects may be most likely to occur and design evaluations in such a way that they
789 are able to draw firm conclusions on whether or not such effects occurred.

790

791

CONCLUSIONS

Most interventions identified focused on providing information aimed at adults in US fast-food chains and collected only customer level outcomes; some of these interventions included a function of enabling choice. Overall, most studies were of low or moderate quality. More 'intrusive' interventions which restricted or guided choice generally showed a positive impact on food outlet and customer level outcomes. However, interventions which simply provided information or enabled choice had a negligible impact. Qualitative findings were reported for many studies, particularly around acceptability and process, and these provide useful learning to inform the development of interventions. Interventions involving incentives, and more 'intrusive' interventions (functions further up the Nuffield ladder, e.g. restrict choice, 'incentives') generally showed consistent positive effects on catering practices and the energy value of foods purchased by customers.

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1049 **Table 2 Adapted typology of study designs and quality**

Study design	Study design quality score
Repeat cross-sectional	Weak
Repeat cross-sectional with control	Moderate
Repeat cross-sectional with cohort subgroup	Moderate
Cohort	Moderate
Repeat cross-sectional with control and controlled cohort subgroup	Strong
Controlled before-after (same participants)	Strong
Controlled trial	Strong

1050

Table 2a Summary of included studies with customer level outcomes (n=23)

Study ID	Study design	Food outlet type	Nuffield intervention ladder	Intervention function	Policy category	Implementation score ¹	Summary impact ↓↕↗ (global quality assessment score) ²
Trans fat law (n=1)							
Angell 2012 ^{38**}	Repeat cross-sectional	11 fast-food chains, NYC, USA	Restrict choice	Environmental restructuring	Environmental/social planning; legislation	5	↑ (moderate)
Changing pre-packed children's meal content (n=1)							
Wansink 2014 ⁴⁸	Repeat cross sectional	McDonald's restaurants (fast-food chain), USA	Restrict choice	Environmental restructuring	Environmental/social planning; communication/marketing	3	↑ (weak)
Price increases for unhealthier choices (n=2)							
<i>Price increases for unhealthier choices only</i>							
Shah 2014 ⁶⁰ (<i>sin tax menu arm</i>)	Controlled clinical trial	One moderately priced restaurant, which specialised in 'small plates' to share, USA	Guide choice (disincentives)	Coercion	Fiscal	5	↓ (strong) unhealthy items ordered by men and women
<i>Price increases for unhealthy choices + signposting</i>							
Shah 2014 ⁶⁰ (<i>unhealthy label + sin tax menu arm</i>)	Controlled clinical trial	One moderately priced restaurant, which specialised in 'small plates' to share, USA	Guide choice (disincentives)	Environmental restructuring; education; coercion	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning; fiscal	5	↑ (strong) decrease in unhealthy items ordered by men and women
Incentives (contingent rewards) (n=1)							
Reimann 2015 ⁵⁴	Cohort	Chain sandwich restaurant, USA	Guide choice (incentives)	Incentives	Unclear (customers	7	↑ (moderate) customers

Study ID	Study design	Food outlet type	Nuffield intervention ladder	Intervention function	Policy category	Implementation score ¹	Summary impact ↓↕↔↑ (global quality assessment score) ²
					offered half portions for same price as full portion, plus a lottery ticket)		choosing half sized portions
Price reductions for healthier choices (n=2)							
<i>Price reduction for healthier choices only</i>							
Horgen & Brownell 2002 ⁵⁸	Controlled clinical trial	Delicatessen-style restaurant (cafeteria), USA	Guide choice (incentives)	Incentives	Fiscal	6	↑ (weak) healthy food purchase
<i>Price reduction for healthier choices + health promotion</i>							
Horgen & Brownell 2002 ⁵⁸	Controlled clinical trial	Delicatessen-style restaurant (cafeteria), USA	Guide choice (incentives)	Environmental restructuring; education; incentives; persuasion; enablement	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning; fiscal	6	↑ (weak) healthy food purchase
Signposting (n=8)							
<i>Signposting only</i>							
Shah 2014 ⁶⁰ (unhealthy label menu arm)	Controlled clinical trial	One moderately priced restaurant, which specialised in 'small plates' to share, USA	Enable choice	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning;	5	↓ (strong) decrease in unhealthy items ordered
Eldridge 1997 ⁴¹	Repeat cross-	Food service areas of large discount department	Enable choice	Environmental restructuring;	Communication/marketing;	6	↓ (weak) sales of 'healthier' food

Study ID	Study design	Food outlet type	Nuffield intervention ladder	Intervention function	Policy category	Implementation score ¹	Summary impact ↓↕↔↑ (global quality assessment score) ²
	sectional	store chain, USA		education	environmental/ social planning;		items
Pandya 2013 ⁴⁶	Repeat cross-sectional	Latino family-owned restaurants, Kansas, USA	Enable choice	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/ marketing; environmental/s ocial planning	7	↓ (weak) healthy food purchases
<i>Sign posting + menu changes</i>							
Nothwehr 2013 ⁴⁵	Repeat cross-sectional	Non-chain owner-operated full menu, sit-down restaurants with typical Midwestern fare, Iowa, USA	Enable choice	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/ marketing; environmental/s ocial planning;	8	↓ (weak) healthy food purchases
Lee-Kwan 2013 ⁵⁹	Controlled clinical trial	Non-franchised small local food establishments that sell ready-to-eat food and beverages for off-premise consumption, Baltimore, USA	Enable choice	Environmental restructuring; education; incentives	Communication/ marketing; environmental/s ocial planning;	8	↑ (moderate) healthy food purchases
<i>Signposting + health promotion/social marketing campaign</i>							
Fitzgerald 2004 ⁴²	Repeat cross-sectional	Community restaurants varied from counter service to table-service, USA	Enable choice	Environmental restructuring; education; persuasion	Communication/ marketing; environmental/s ocial planning;	6	↓ (weak) sales of 'heart healthy' menu items
Acharya 2006 ³¹	Repeat cross-sectional with control	Restaurant chains (fine-dining and moderately priced, family-style restaurants (Mexican,	Enable choice	Environmental restructuring; education; incentives;	Communication/ marketing; environmental/s ocial planning;	6	↑ (moderate) healthy food purchases

Study ID	Study design	Food outlet type	Nuffield intervention ladder	Intervention function	Policy category	Implementation score ¹	Summary impact ↓↑↔ (global quality assessment score) ²
		upscale pizza, and 40s-style diner), California, USA		persuasion			
Horgen & Brownell 2002 ⁵⁸ (<i>health promotion condition</i>)	Controlled clinical trial	Delicatessen-style restaurant (cafeteria), USA	Enable choice	Environmental restructuring; education; persuasion; enablement	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning	6	↑ (weak) healthy food purchase
Calorie labelling law (n=10)							
<i>Calorie labelling law only</i>							
Bollinger 2011 ³³	Repeat cross-sectional with control plus subgroup cohort	Starbucks Cafes, New York City (NYC), USA	Provide information	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning; legislation	5	↑ (strong)
Chen 2015 ³⁹	Repeat cross sectional	Regulated chain or fast food restaurants in King County, USA	Provide information	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning; legislation	5	↑ (weak) saw and used calorie information
Dumanovsky 2011 ^{40**}	Repeat cross-sectional	11 fast-food chains, NYC, USA	Provide information	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning;	5	↓ (moderate)

Study ID	Study design	Food outlet type	Nuffield intervention ladder	Intervention function	Policy category	Implementation score ¹	Summary impact ↓↑↔ (global quality assessment score) ²
					legislation		
Krieger 2013 ^{43***}	Repeat cross-sectional, retrospective	Restaurants from 10 chains Subway; McDonald's; Taco del Mar; Taco Time; Starbuck's; Quizno's; Tully's; Jack in the Box; Burger King; Taco Bell. King County, USA	Provide information	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning; legislation	4	↓ (moderate)
Namba 2013 ³⁷	Repeat cross-sectional with control	Large chain fast food restaurants, USA	Provide information	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning; legislation	3	↔ (strong) adults and children
Elbel 2009 ³⁴	Repeat cross-sectional with control	Chain restaurants with >15 establishments - McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, KFC in NYC, USA	Provide information	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning; legislation	4	↔ (moderate) adults and children
Elbel 2013 ³⁵	Repeat cross-sectional (pre and post legislation) with control	Fast food restaurants (McDonald's and Burger King) in Philadelphia (which implemented calorie labelling policies) and Baltimore (which did not and acted as a	Provide information	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning; legislation	5	↔ (moderate)

Study ID	Study design	Food outlet type	Nuffield intervention ladder	Intervention function	Policy category	Implementation score ¹	Summary impact ↓↑↔ (global quality assessment score) ²
	cohort (<i>difference in difference design</i>)	matched comparison city), USA					
Finkelstein 2011 ³⁶	Repeat cross-sectional with control	Mexican fast-food restaurant chain - Taco Time Northwest, King County, USA	Provide information	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning; legislation	3	↔ (moderate)
Tandon 2011 ⁵⁵	Controlled before and after study (same participants)	Chain restaurants, King County, USA	Provide information	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning; legislation	4	↔ (weak) children
<i>Calorie labelling law + nutritional recommendation information</i>							
Downs 2013 ⁵⁷	Controlled clinical trial	2 McDonalds restaurants in NYC, USA	Provide information	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning;	4	↔ (moderate)
<i>Voluntary calorie labelling (n=1)</i>							
Pulos & Leng 2010 ⁴⁷	Repeat cross-sectional	Full service locally owned (non-chain) restaurants; 'casual, midrange', USA	Provide information	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning	6	↑ (weak) energy, fat and sodium levels of foods purchased
<i>Personalised receipts (n=1)</i>							
Bedard & Kuhn 2013 ³²	Repeat cross-	Burgerville restaurants (fast-food chain),	Provide information	Environmental restructuring;	Communication/marketing	4	↔ (weak)

Study ID	Study design	Food outlet type	Nuffield intervention ladder	Intervention function	Policy category	Implementation score ¹	Summary impact ↓↕↔↑ (global quality assessment score) ²
	sectional with control	California, USA		education; persuasion			

¹ Implementation score was determined using a checklist for obesity related interventions²⁵ adapted from workplace interventions²⁶

²energy purchased unless otherwise stated, Key: effective (↑); equally effective as comparison group (↔); effectiveness mixed by outcome or gender (↕); or not effective (↓); **Dumanovsky 2011 and Angell 2012 used same data set; ***Krieger 2013 used the same data set as Saelens 2012 (food outlet level outcomes, Table 3)

Table 2b Summary of included studies with food outlet level outcomes (n=7)

Study ID	Study design	Food outlet type	Nuffield intervention ladder	Intervention function	Policy category	Implementation score ¹	Summary impact ↓↑↔↓ (global quality assessment score)
Award schemes (n=2)							
Gase 2015 ⁵²	Cohort	Licensed retail restaurants, Los Angeles County, USA	Restrict choice	Restriction; Environmental restructuring	Regulation; Environmental/social planning	6	↑ (weak) reduced-sized portions available and 'healthier' children's meals
Bagwell 2014 ⁵⁰	Cohort	Small independent catering outlets, London, UK	Restrict choice	Restriction; Environmental restructuring; Education	Communication/marketing; Regulation; Environmental/social planning	2	↑ (weak) 'healthy' criteria met by businesses (inc. catering practices, 'healthy' options, health promotion)
Signposting (n=1)							
<i>Signposting + health promotion/social marketing campaign</i>							
Hanni 2009 ⁵³	Cohort	Taquerias - privately owned, fast-food-style Mexican restaurants, USA	Enable choice	Environmental restructuring; education; incentives; persuasion; enablement; training; modelling	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning; guidelines	9	↑ (weak) promoting 'healthier' food items
Telemarketing of healthy food choices (n=2)							
Wiggers 2001 ^{49**}	Repeat cross-	Licensed hotels, clubs and nightclubs, New South	Enable choice	Education	Communication/marketing;	6	↑ (weak) serving healthier food

Study ID	Study design	Food outlet type	Nuffield intervention ladder	Intervention function	Policy category	Implementation score ¹	Summary impact ↓↕↔↑ (global quality assessment score)
	sectional plus subgroup cohort	Wales, Australia			environmental/social planning; service provision		options
Licata 2002 ^{44**}	Repeat cross-sectional plus subgroup cohort	Restaurants and cafés, New South Wales, Australia	Enable choice	Education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning; service provision	6	↓ (weak) nutrition-related health promotion practices
Calorie labelling law (n=2)							
<i>Calorie labelling law only</i>							
Bruemmer 2012 ⁵¹	Cohort	Chain restaurants with >4 establishments (sit down and fast food). Burgers (e.g., McDonalds, Burger King), pizza (e.g., Pizza Hut, Dominos), sandwich/sub (e.g., Subway, Blimpie), or Tex-Mex (e.g., Taco Time, Taco del Mar). King County, USA	Provide information	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning; legislation	3	↑ (weak) energy content of main meals
Saelens 2012 ^{56***}	Controlled before and after study (retrospecti	Fast food chain restaurants, King County, USA	Provide information	Environmental restructuring; education	Communication/marketing; environmental/social planning;	4	↔ (strong) 'healthfulness' of adult and children's menus

Study ID	Study design	Food outlet type	Nuffield intervention ladder	Intervention function	Policy category	Implementation score ¹	Summary impact ↓↑↔ (global quality assessment score)
	ve)				legislation		

¹ Implementation score was determined using a checklist for obesity related interventions²⁵ adapted from workplace interventions²⁶

Key: effective (↑); equally effective as the comparison group (↔); effectiveness mixed by outcome or gender (↓); or not effective (↓)

Licata 2002 and Wiggers 2001 used same data pool and split by different settings; *Saelens 2012 used the same data set as Krieger 2013 (customer level outcomes, Table 2)