



# YOUR WEIGHT

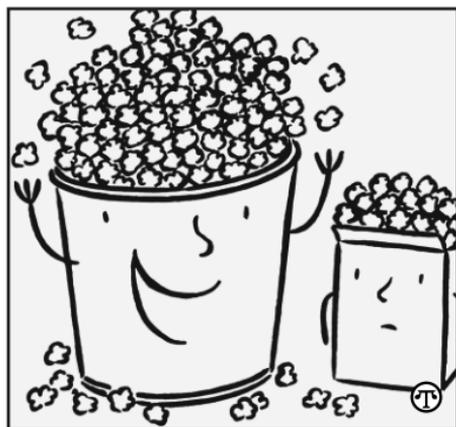
## Recognizing Hidden Persuaders

(NAPSA)—People seem to gain weight easily but have a harder time taking it off. Americans continue to get heavier, increasing their risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer and other ailments. Intriguing new research shows that part of the reason healthy eating is so difficult is that “hidden persuaders” can lead you to eat more than you think you’re eating.

Dr. Brian Wansink, director of the Cornell Food and Brand Lab, reviewed the latest research into these hidden persuaders in a recent talk at the National Institutes of Health. For example, the size and shape of containers, he said, can as much as double the amount of food you consume. In one study, researchers gave participants free popcorn in large or extra-large sizes. People eating from the extra-large containers ate 45 to 50 percent more than those eating from the large ones. They even ate 40 to 45 percent more when stale popcorn was served in bigger containers.

Food descriptions affect your food intake as well. Wansink described how researchers were able to help a cafeteria boost its business by using creative terms that appeal to the senses, like “Belgium Black Forest double chocolate cake” instead of just “chocolate cake.” People making selections from the more descriptive menus were overwhelmingly more enthusiastic about their food. This common advertising technique, called descriptive labeling, not only attracts people to certain items but causes them to eat more.

Losing track of how much you are eating also leads you to eat



more. In one study, students at a Super Bowl party in a restaurant were given free all-you-can-eat chicken wings. Plates were bused from some of the tables while bones were left to pile high on others. Those at the bused tables seemed to have a harder time judging how much food they were eating and wound up eating more. The researchers concluded that those who saw reminders of what they were eating consumed less. This conclusion was confirmed by another study showing that people ate less candy when they saw their empty wrappers pile up.

Finally, Wansink pointed out that focusing on one or two healthy foods doesn’t always lead to healthier eating. It’s the sum of everything you eat that counts. He stressed the importance of eating a healthier diet overall rather than focusing on separate foods. Developing a keen awareness of these hidden persuaders is an important step in controlling the amount and quality of food you eat.

You can learn more from NIH News in Health, a publication of the National Institutes of Health ([newsinhealth.nih.gov](http://newsinhealth.nih.gov)).