

Mint for Mood, Not Memory: The Effect of Peppermint Candy on Happiness and Memory

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The consumption of “pleasure foods” (i.e., sweets, desserts, etc.) has increased over the past century and consumer spending has shifted with a preference for such foods (Lebergott, 2014). This preference begins early in life (Fidler Mis et al., 2017). This study examined the effect of peppermint candy on participants’ self-reported happiness and cognitive performance. Male and female participants ($N=120$) first indicated their overall level of happiness after consuming a peppermint candy or not. Participants then completed a word-learning task in which they studied a list of 10 words for 30 s, followed by a 30 s delay and a recall test. As predicted, participants in the peppermint condition reported more happiness and recalled fewer words compared to those in the no peppermint condition. A significant interaction indicated that males were more affected by peppermint consumption in recall performance compared to females. These findings are discussed in terms of Distraction-Conflict Theory and the role of sensory distractions in cognitive performance and mood.

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