

Optimal Defaults Promote Healthy Grocery Purchases in Adults with Type 2 Diabetes

Applying optimal defaults to online grocery shopping resulted in the promotion of healthier grocery purchases among adults with or at risk for type 2 diabetes, researchers reported in Obesity.

“Implementing optimal defaults during online grocery shopping may decrease the individual effort required to make healthy food choices and promote healthy diets while preserving autonomy and choice,” Stephanie Anzman-Frasca, PhD, of the Department of Pediatrics at Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at the University of Buffalo, New York, and colleagues wrote.

This randomized trial included 64 adults (mean age, 53.2 years; 84.4% women) who were [diagnosed with or were at an increased risk for type 2 diabetes](#) and shopped at one of the two study stores. Participants were randomly assigned to the optimal defaults group (n = 23), the online group (n = 21), or the control group (n = 20). All groups received three diabetes-friendly recipes across the 3-week intervention period.

The online group ordered their groceries through the online website, the optimal defaults group ordered their groceries through the online website but also had their carts prefilled with items from the recipes and the control group shopped in person. At baseline, during each week of the study, and after the intervention, participants provided their weekly grocery receipt data for assessment.

Researchers observed significantly greater nutritional quality among participants in the optimal defaults group compared with the other two groups ($P < .001$). In addition, between-group comparisons of least-squares means showed consistent and significant effects of the optimal defaults intervention while intervention components were in place from weeks 2 through 4.

However, once these intervention components were removed, these differences were no longer statistically significant. There were also no significant group, time, or group-by-time interaction effects when examining energy, carbohydrates, and sugar purchased, the researchers wrote.

“Future research with larger and more diverse samples, longer intervention periods, and additional outcome assessments are recommended to expand upon the emerging research supporting the potential of optimal defaults to [promote healthier grocery purchases](#),” the researchers wrote. “Continued examination of this approach could promote healthy food access in a manner that builds upon the strong evidence base

supporting optimal defaults and allows for tailoring to individual dietary preferences and needs.”

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