

Protocol for: Impact of an intuitive eating intervention on exercise motives and personal well-being in physically active university women with disordered eating: A randomized controlled trial

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INTRODUCTION

Obesity and its related comorbidities have become a worldwide battle which are traditionally addressed by dieting and physical activity in order to achieve weight loss. However, a growing body of research has shown how these strategies are ineffective for long-term weight loss and do not confer sustainable health improvements (1).

In fact, they are associated with significant adverse psychological and physical outcomes, including (2):

- ↑ Disordered eating behaviours and risk for development of an eating disorder
- ↑ Food and body preoccupation
- ↓ Self-esteem
- Weight-related stigmatization and discrimination
- Depression
- Weight cycling

Thus, there is increasing interest for **weight-neutral approaches** that focus on lifestyle modifications to improve social, psychological, behavioural and physical health parameters without promoting the pursuit of intentional weight loss. **Intuitive eating** (IE) is a novel weight-neutral approach that has gained popularity in the last few years and has shown promising results (3).

Intuitive Eating

IE can be described as a **multidimensional approach** that promotes attunement to internal cues, eating in response to hunger and satiety, coping with emotions without food, body acceptance and mindful movement.

It has been linked to higher rates of well-being, self-esteem, body satisfaction and lower rates of depressive symptoms and extreme weight control behaviours, particularly binge eating (4).

However, interventions based on the IE principles are very scarce, with only two known trials conducted to this date.

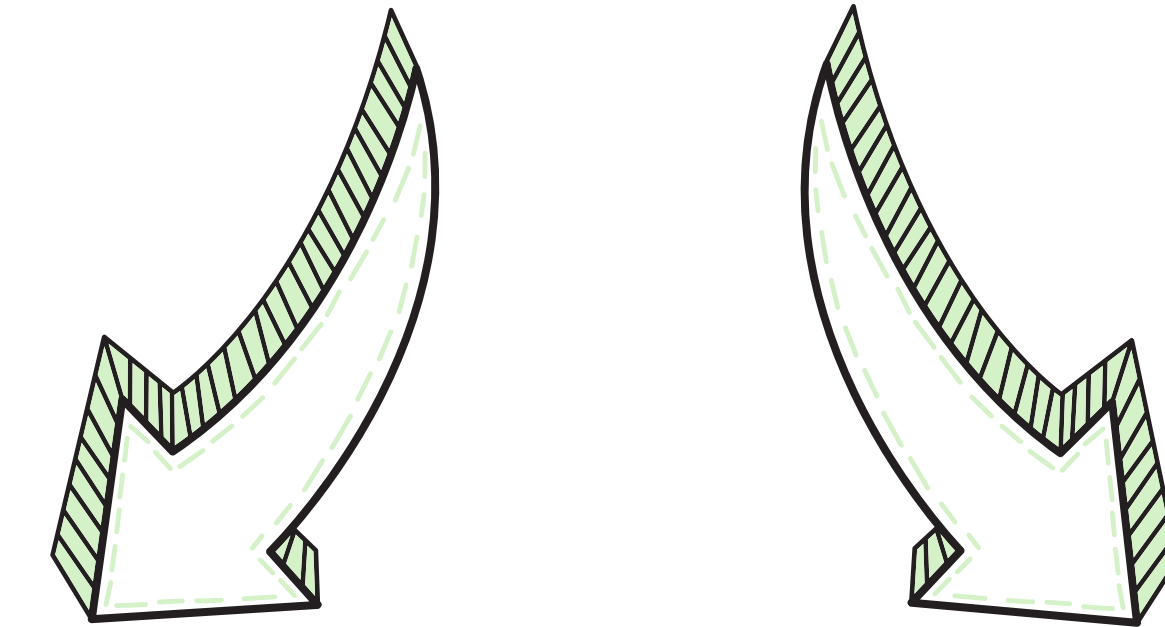
OBJECTIVES

To investigate the impact of an **8-week IE intervention** in physically active university women on IE scores, as well as its effects on physical activity motives, disordered eating behaviours, diet quality, body appreciation and dissatisfaction and weight-bias internalization.

METHODS



100 physically active women
18-30 years old
With ≥ 1 fasting, binge, or compensatory behavior



Wait list
n = 50

Intuitive Eating
intervention
n = 50

Intervention

The experimental group participants will undergo an **1.5-hour online group meeting once a week** lead by a registered dietitian for 8 weeks where each session will be based on one IE principle as described by Tribole and Resch (5). All participants will complete a battery of validated self-reported questionnaires before and after the IE intervention or the 8-week wait list.

Session Content

- | | |
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| ① Introduction; Reject the diet mentality | ⑤ Cope with your emotions with kindness |
| ② Honor your hunger | ⑥ Respect your body |
| ③ Make peace with food; Challenge the food police | ⑦ Movement – feel the difference |
| ④ Discover the satisfaction factor; Feel your fullness | ⑧ Honor your health – gentle nutrition; Conclusion |

Measures

- 23-item Intuitive Eating Scale-2
- Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire 6.0
- 10-item Body Appreciation Scale-2
- 11-item Modified Weight Bias Internalization Scale
- Function of Exercise Scale
- Web-Based Food Frequency Questionnaire

PERTINENCE

Considering the negative impacts of dieting and physical activity when performed solely for weight loss on health and the popularity of diets in university women, it is crucial to find alternative interventions to **improve health on the long-term**. Knowledge of the effect of an intuitive eating intervention on exercise motives and psychological well-being may provide useful information to **healthcare professionals** (e.g. psychologists, nutritionists) during the planning of a behavioral/nutritional intervention.

References

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