

# Cross-Cultural Effects of Fruit and Vegetable Consumption on **SKIN COLOR**

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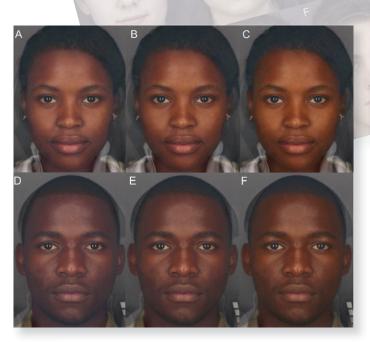
### Projected effects of fruit and vegetable consumption on White facial appearance. Each image is a blend of four faces of the same sex, thereby removing cues to individual identity. The central column (b, e) reflects the individual's starting skin color under calibrated conditions. The left images (a, d) simulate the effect of a 6.5 portion per day decrease in fruit and vegetable consumption. The right column (c, f) simulates the effect of increasing fruit and vegetable consumption by 6.5 portions. These simulations are based on the association of spectrophotometrically measured skin color and fruit and vegetable consumption in a mixed group of White and Asian ethnicity.<sup>2,4</sup>

## CAROTENOIDS, A CLASS OF MORE THAN 600 PLANT PIGMENTS, IMPART YELLOW-

red coloration to fruits and vegetables. These pigments also color human skin<sup>1</sup> and reflect the individual's diet; high consumers of fruit and vegetables have greater skin yellowness than do low consumers,<sup>2</sup> and changes in diet quickly affect the level of carotenoids in the skin.<sup>3,4</sup> Serum carotenoid levels are lowered during chronic infection<sup>5,6</sup>; hence skin carotenoid levels and skin color may serve as a perceptible cue of general health and diet quality.<sup>7</sup> Carotenoid coloration has been shown to benefit appearance. White individuals who are able to manipulate the skin color of facial images consistently increase the yellowness to optimize the appearance of health.<sup>2</sup>

Individuals may be motivated to improve their diet if they are presented with images such as those in this article (see our Commentary in this issue as well), which illustrate the potential effect that a healthy diet can have on appearance. Such an approach could be suitable for reaching a wide audience; therefore, it is important to consider whether the change in skin coloration is seen as attractive across cultures. Empirical research suggests that this

# **IMAGES OF HEALTH**



Projected effects of fruit and vegetable consumption on African facial appearance. Images manufactured in similar way to that described previously.

would be the case: African<sup>2</sup> and Asian (R.D.W., unpublished data, April 2010) individuals share the preference with White individuals for raised skin yellowness in their own faces. This is illustrated in the facial images, which project the effect of increased or decreased fruit and vegetable consumption across different ethnicities.

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*This article was accepted September* 30, 2011.

doi:10.2105/AJPH.2011.300495

### Contributors

R.D. Whitehead wrote the article, originated the study, and collected and manipulated the images. V. Coetzee collected images. G. Ozakinci revised the article. D.I. Perrett helped originate the study and draft and revise the article.

### **Acknowledgments**

This work was supported financially by the UK Economic and Social Research Council, Unilever Research, the British Academy, and the Wolfson Foundation. The authors would like to thank Dan-

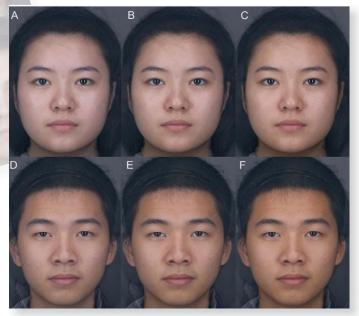
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Projected effects of fruit and vegetable consumption on Asian facial appearance. Images manufactured in similar way to that described previously.

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