

Ice-cream warms up the pleasure centres of the brain, says study

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.med.diseases.hepatitis/2005-05/msg00006.html>

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 - *Date:* Sun, 1 May 2005 03:43:11 -0700 (PDT)
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By Emily Pennink

http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/health_medical/story.jsp?story=634040

29 April 2005

For those who view a loaded bowl of ice-cream as heaven, the news will come as no surprise – consuming the frozen dessert makes people happy.

Ice-cream lights up the brain's pleasure zones, according to a study by the Centre of Neuroimaging Sciences at the Institute of Psychiatry in London.

Participants in the study, commissioned by Unilever, had their brains scanned using functional magnetic resonance imaging – fMRI – a non-invasive technique that allowed researchers to see which areas of the brain were activated when participants ate a particular brand of ice-cream.

The results showed that eating the ice-cream had an immediate effect on parts of the brain that previous research has shown were activated when someone is really enjoying themselves – the pleasure areas – which include a major processing area at the front of the brain, the orbitofrontal cortex. Don Darling, vice-president development for Unilever Ice Cream Europe, said: "We all know that eating an ice cream is one of life's pleasures. It's fun to eat and has very positive memory associations with childhood, holidays, sunshine and good times.

"However, this is the first time that we've been able to show that ice-cream makes you happy. Just one spoonful of Carte D'Or lights up the happy zones of the brain in clinical trials."

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