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1 **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ATTENUATES THE EFFECT OF THE *FTO* GENOTYPE ON**
2 **OBESITY TRAITS IN EUROPEAN ADULTS: THE FOOD4ME STUDY**

3

4 AUTHOR NAMES

5

6 Carlos Celis-Morales^{1*}, Cyril F M Marsaux^{2*}, Katherine M Livingstone¹, Santiago Navas-
7 Carretero³, Rodrigo San-Cristobal³, Clare B O'Donovan⁴, Hannah Forster⁴, Clara Woolhead⁴,
8 Rosalind Fallaize⁵, Anna L Macready⁵, Silvia Kolossa⁶, Jacqueline Hallmann⁶, Lydia Tsigoti⁷,
9 Christina P Lambrinou⁷, George Moschonis⁷, Magdalena Godlewska⁸, Agnieszka Surwiłło⁸,
10 Keith Grimaldi⁹, Jildau Bouwman¹⁰, Yannis Manios⁷, Iwona Traczyk⁸, Christian A Drevon¹¹,
11 Laurence D Parnell¹², Hannelore Daniel⁶, Eileen R Gibney⁴, Lorraine Brennan⁴, Marianne C
12 Walsh³, Mike Gibney⁴, Julie A Lovegrove⁵, J Alfredo Martinez³, Wim H M Saris^{2*}, John C
13 Mathers^{1*}, on behalf of the Food4Me Study.

14 ***Both authors contributed equally to this work and are joint first or senior authors**

15

16 **AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS**

17 ¹ Human Nutrition Research Centre, Institute of Cellular Medicine, Newcastle University,
18 Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK

19 ² Department of Human Biology, NUTRIM, School for Nutrition and Translational Research in
20 Metabolism, Maastricht University Medical Centre, Maastricht, The Netherlands

21 ³ Department of Nutrition, Food Science and Physiology, University of Navarra; CIBER
22 Fisiopatología Obesidad y Nutrición (CIBERobn), Instituto de Salud Carlos III, Spain (SN-C &
23 JAM)

24 ⁴ UCD Institute of Food and Health, University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4, Republic of
25 Ireland

26 ⁵ Hugh Sinclair Unit of Human Nutrition and Institute for Cardiovascular and Metabolic
27 Research, University of Reading, Reading, UK.

28 ⁶ ZIEL Research Center of Nutrition and Food Sciences, Biochemistry Unit, Technische
29 Universität München, Germany.

30 ⁷ Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Harokopio University, Athens, Greece.

31 ⁸ National Food & Nutrition Institute (IZZ), Poland.

32 ⁹ Eurogenetica Ltd, 7 Salisbury Road, Burnham-on-Sea, UK

33 ¹⁰ TNO, Microbiology and Systems Biology, Utrechtseweg 48, 3704 HE Zeist, The Netherlands.

34 ¹¹ Department of Nutrition, Institute of Basic Medical Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University
35 of Oslo, Oslo, Norway.

36 ¹² Nutrition and Genomics Laboratory, Jean Mayer US Department of Agriculture Human
37 Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

38

39 **KEYWORDS**

40 *FTO*, genetic, genotype, obesity, physical activity

41

42 **RUNNING TITLE**

43 ***FTO* and physical activity interaction**

44

45 **CORRESPONDING AUTHOR**

46 Professor John C. Mathers

47 Human Nutrition Research Centre

48 Institute of Cellular Medicine
49 Newcastle University
50 Campus for Ageing and Vitality
51 Newcastle upon Tyne
52 NE4 5PL
53 UK
54 john.mathers@newcastle.ac.uk
55 Tel: +44 (0) 1912081133
56 Fax: +44 (0) 1912081101

57

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64

65 **Conflict of interest**

66 The authors declare no conflict of interest.

67

68 **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION**

69 Author responsibilities were as follows: YM, IT, CAD, ERG, LB, JAL, JAM, WHMS, HD, MG and
70 JCM contributed to the research design. JCM was the Food4Me Proof of Principle study leader.

71 CCM, CFMM, HF, CBO, CW, AM, RF, SNC, RSC, SK, LT, CPL, MG, AS, MCW, ERG, LB and JCM

72 contributed to the developing the Standardized Operating Procedures for the study. CCM, SNC,
73 RSC, CW, CBO, HF, CFMM, AM, RF, SK, LT, CPL, MG, AS, MCW and JCM conducted the
74 intervention. CCM, CFMM and WHMS contributed to physical activity measurements. CCM and
75 CFMM wrote the paper and CCM performed the statistical analysis for the manuscript. CCM
76 and CFMM are joint first authors. All authors contributed to a critical review of the manuscript
77 during the writing process. All authors approved the final version to be published.

78

79 WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN ABOUT THIS SUBJECT?

- 80 • Most of the studies to date have been focused on the interplay between *FTO* gene and
81 self-reported physical activity.
- 82 • However, measurement errors associated to a self-reported nature of questionnaires
83 may have attenuated the true strength of the gene-physical activity interplay.
- 84 • Limited data is available on objective measured physical activity and its interaction with
85 the *FTO* gene on obesity-related markers.

86

87 WHAT DOES YOUR STUDY ADD?

- 88 • Our findings emphasise that physical activity may be a particularly effective way of
89 controlling body weight in individuals with a genetic predisposition towards obesity.
- 90 • The apparent effect of an active lifestyle on genetic predisposition to obesity (~4kg
91 differences in the *FTO*-related effect size on body mass for inactive vs active individuals)
92 is large enough to be clinically relevant.

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98 **ABSTRACT (words=198)**

99 **Objective:** To examine whether the effect of *FTO* loci on obesity-related traits could be
100 modified by physical activity (PA) levels in European adults.

101 **Methods:** Of 1,607 Food4Me participants randomised, 1,280 were genotyped for the *FTO*
102 (rs9939609) and had available PA data. PA was measured objectively using accelerometers
103 (TracmorD, Philips), whereas anthropometric measures (BMI, and waist circumference; WC)
104 were self-reported via the internet.

105 **Results:** *FTO* genotype was associated with a higher body weight (β : 1.09 kg per risk allele,
106 [95%CI: 0.14-2.04]; $P=0.024$), BMI (β : 0.54 kg.m⁻², [0.23-0.83]; $P<0.0001$) and WC (β : 1.07 cm,
107 [0.24-1.90]; $P=0.011$). Moderate-equivalent PA attenuated the effect of *FTO* on BMI
108 ($P_{\text{interaction}}=0.020$). Among inactive individuals, *FTO* increased BMI by 1.06 kg.m⁻² per allele
109 ($p=0.024$) whereas the increase in BMI was substantially attenuated among active individuals
110 (0.16 kg.m⁻², $p=0.388$). We observed similar effects for WC ($P_{\text{interaction}}=0.005$): the *FTO* risk allele
111 increased WC by 2.72 cm per allele among inactive individuals but by only 0.49 cm in active
112 individuals.

113 **Conclusions:** PA attenuates the effect of *FTO* genotype on BMI and WC. This may have
114 important public health implications because genetic susceptibility to obesity in the presence of
115 *FTO* variants may be reduced by adopting a physically active lifestyle.

116

117

118

119 INTRODUCTION

120 Changes in lifestyle, including higher energy intake and lack of physical activity (PA), have been
121 the driving force behind the dramatic increase in obesity prevalence over the past three
122 decades (1, 2). The prevalence of obesity has increased markedly, with 16.6% of European
123 adults (3) and 9.3% of adults globally now having obesity (4). However, epidemiological studies
124 show that genetic factors play an important role in the development of obesity (5), suggesting
125 that obesity is a multifactorial condition influenced by a complex interplay between lifestyle
126 and genetics (2, 5, 6).

127 Recent genome wide association studies have identified single nucleotide polymorphisms
128 (SNPs) in genes (7), including the fat mass and obesity-associated gene (*FTO*), that are strongly
129 associated with the development of obesity (7, 8, 9, 10). A study of 38,759 individuals revealed
130 that subjects homozygous for the *FTO* (rs9939609) risk allele weighed on average 3kg more and
131 had 1.7-fold increased odds of being obese compared with individuals homozygous for the
132 lower-risk allele (10). Although the evidence for an effect of *FTO*, or other obesity-related loci,
133 on obesity is strong, the variance in BMI explained by genetic variants is small (2.7%) (11, 12).
134 This is in stark contrast with earlier studies of the heritability of BMI, which was estimated to be
135 40-70% (5, 13). Gene-lifestyle interactions may contribute to the unexplained heritability of BMI
136 and obesity (14, 15), and numerous such interactions for many different cardio-metabolic
137 phenotypes, including obesity anthropometrics, were recently catalogued from 386 published
138 scientific reports (16). Much work remains to determine how robust these interactions are. Still,
139 modulation of *FTO*-obesity associations by self-reported (SR) PA is one of the most replicated
140 (16).

141 Although genetically predisposed individuals may be more susceptible to obesity in an
142 obesogenic environment, with a higher risk of over-consumption as was shown in twin studies
143 (13), there has been limited evidence of genotype-lifestyle interactions on adiposity outcomes
144 (6, 17). Importantly, most of the studies to date have focused on the interplay between genes
145 and self-reported (SR) PA, where measurement error in SR PA may have attenuated the true
146 strength of the gene-PA interaction (18). To date, only very few studies have used objectively
147 measured PA to examine the *FTO*-PA interaction in adults (19, 20). Therefore, in the current
148 study, we investigated whether the effect of the *FTO* loci on obesity-related traits was modified
149 by objectively measured PA in European adults from the Food4Me study.

150

151 **METHODS**

152 **Study population**

153 The Food4Me Proof of Principle (PoP) study was a 6-month, 4-arm, internet-based, randomised
154 controlled trial (RCT) conducted across 7 European countries (www.food4me.org) (21). 1,607
155 participants from the following recruitment sites: University College Dublin (Ireland),
156 Maastricht University (The Netherlands), University of Navarra (Spain), Harokopio University
157 (Greece), University of Reading (United Kingdom, UK), National Food and Nutrition Institute
158 (Poland), and Technical University of Munich (Germany), were randomised into the RCT.
159 Participants recruited and randomised per country has been described elsewhere(21, 22).
160 Participants aged ≥ 18 years of age were included in the study. To keep the cohort as
161 representative as possible of the adult European population, a minimal set of exclusion criteria
162 were applied as described elsewhere (21).

163

164 Study measures

165 Participants consented to self-report their measures via the internet and to send biological
166 samples (Dried Blood Spot cards and buccal swabs) by post, using pre-paid, stamped addressed
167 envelopes. To ensure that procedures were similar in all recruiting centres, standardised
168 operating procedures were prepared for all measurements, and researchers underwent
169 centralised training. Moreover, to enable participants to collect and report the required
170 information and to collect, process and dispatch the biological samples correctly, participants
171 were given printed detailed instructions, and video demonstrations of key procedures were
172 available online. All instructions were provided in the language of the country of recruitment
173 (21).

174

175 Collection of demographic and anthropometric data

176 An online screening questionnaire collected detailed SR information on demographic, food
177 choices, health-related and anthropometric data. At baseline, body weight, height and waist
178 circumference (WC) were self-measured and self-reported by participants via the internet.
179 Participants were instructed to measure body weight after an overnight fast, without shoes and
180 wearing light clothing using a home or commercial scale, and to measure height, barefoot,
181 using a standardised measuring tape provided by Food4Me (21). WC was measured at the mid-
182 point between the lower rib and the iliac crest using the provided tape measure. Central
183 obesity was defined as WC >88 cm for women and >102 cm for men. BMI was calculated from
184 body weight and height. Adiposity status was defined using WHO criteria for BMI

185 (underweight $<18.5 \text{ kg.m}^{-2}$, normal weight $\geq 18.5 \text{ kg.m}^{-2}$ to $\leq 24.9 \text{ kg.m}^{-2}$, overweight $\geq 25.0 \text{ kg.m}^{-2}$
186 to $\leq 29.9 \text{ kg.m}^{-2}$ and obese $\geq 30.0 \text{ kg.m}^{-2}$). SR measurements were validated in a sub-sample of
187 the participants ($n=140$) and showed a high degree of reliability (23).

188

189 **Physical activity measures and analysis**

190 Physical activity levels (PAL) and time spent in sedentary behaviours were measured objectively
191 using triaxial accelerometers (TracmorD, Philips Consumer Lifestyle, The Netherlands) (24). All
192 participants were instructed to wear the accelerometer every day during waking hours, except
193 when taking a shower, for the whole duration of the study. For the analyses reported in this
194 paper, data collected over 2 weeks at baseline were used. Participants were instructed to
195 upload their PA data into the study server via the internet.

196 Data were recorded with a time sampling interval of 1 min (i.e. 1-min epochs). A day was
197 considered valid if the volunteer had worn the TracmorD for at least 10 hours, but not longer
198 than 18 hours. Wear time was defined as 24 hours minus non-wear time. To define non-wear
199 time, we adapted the recommendations of Choi et al. (25) to the TracmorD. The R software
200 version 3.1.2 was used for PA data processing.

201 PA domains were based on application of thresholds for activity energy expenditure (AEE) and
202 included time spent in sedentary behaviours (corresponding to <1.5 METs), light (1.5 to <3
203 METs), moderate (3 to <6 METs), vigorous (≥ 6 METs) or moderate-equivalent intensity PA (26).
204 Moderate-equivalent PA was derived using the following equation [moderate PA + (vigorous PA
205 * 2)] (27).

206 Adherence to the WHO physical activity recommendations was examined by estimating the
207 proportion of volunteers who accumulated at least 150 minutes per week of moderate PA or 75
208 minutes of vigorous PA or an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous PA, in bouts of
209 at least 10 minutes (27). This translates to at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-
210 equivalent PA. Three-categorical variables were created for all PA variables. For the moderate-
211 equivalent PA variable, 150 and 300 min.week⁻¹ of moderate-equivalent PA were used to create
212 3 relevant categories. Similarly, for the moderate PA variable, 150 and 300 min.week⁻¹ of
213 moderate PA were used to create the 3 categories. For all other PA variables, categories were
214 tertiles derived from STATA.

215

216 ***Genotypic analyses***

217 Buccal cell samples were collected from participants at baseline using Isohelix SK-1 DNA buccal
218 swabs and Isohelix dried-capsules and posted to each recruiting centre for shipment to LGC
219 Genomics (Hertfordshire, United Kingdom). LGC Genomics extracted DNA and genotyped
220 specific loci using KASP™ genotyping assays. *FTO* SNPs (rs9939609 and rs1121980) were
221 genotyped and showed a high linkage disequilibrium ($r^2=0.96$). Therefore, results for rs1121980
222 are not reported. Accuracy of the genotyping analysis has been assessed and reported
223 elsewhere(23).

224 A goodness-of-fit chi-square test was performed to examine if the observed genotype counts
225 were in Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium. Genotype frequency for the *FTO* rs9939609 variant did
226 not deviate from Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium (TT=469, TA=739 and AA=264, $P=0.345$).

227

228 **Ethics approval and participant consent**

229 The Research Ethics Committees at each University or Research Centre delivering the
230 intervention granted ethics approval for the study. The Food4Me trial was registered as a RCT
231 (NCT01530139) at www.clinicaltrials.gov. All participants who expressed an interest in the
232 study were asked to sign online consent forms at two stages in the screening process. These
233 forms were automatically directed to the local study investigators to be counter-signed and
234 archived (21).

235

236 **Statistical analysis**

237 Baseline data were used for the present analyses. Results from descriptive analyses are
238 presented as means and SD for continuous variables and as percentages for categorical
239 variables.

240 Robust Linear Regression analyses were used to test for associations between the main
241 outcomes (weight, BMI and WC) and *FTO* genotype. *FTO* was coded using an additive genetic
242 model (TT=0, AT=1, AA=2) and PA was categorized and coded as ordinal variable (0=Lower,
243 1=Middle, 2=Higher). The interplay between PA and *FTO* genotype was investigated by
244 including an interaction term in the models, with PA and *FTO* variables coded as specified
245 above. For categorical outcomes (% of participants with overweight or obesity), Robust Logistic
246 Regression was used and *FTO* and PA (coded as ordinal variables) were included in the model
247 using an interaction term. Analyses were adjusted for age, sex, country, season and monitor
248 wearing time, as appropriate. Results were deemed significant at $P<0.05$. Data were analysed
249 using Stata (version 13; StataCorp. College Station, TX, USA).

250

251 **RESULTS**

252 **Cohort characteristics**

253 Of the 1,607 individuals randomised into the Food4Me study, data at baseline on *FTO* genotype
254 and PA were available for 1,280 participants (58% were women and 97% were Caucasians). As
255 summarised in Table 1, 30% of individuals had overweight and 16% had obesity. In addition, WC
256 was above the healthy limit (>102 cm for males and 88 cm for females) for 23% of males and
257 26% of females. Although 57% of men and 40% of women met the PA recommendation (≥ 150
258 minutes of moderate-equivalent PA a week), 28% of the participants recorded less than 1
259 minute of vigorous intensity PA daily. All PA variables were significantly associated with
260 obesity-related markers (Table S5).

261 **Association of *FTO* genotype with obesity measures**

262 Carriage of the A allele of the *FTO* rs9939609 variant was associated with higher body weight
263 [β : 1.09 kg increase per risk allele, 95%CI (0.14 to 2.04), $P=0.024$], BMI [β : 0.54 kg.m⁻², 95%CI
264 (0.23 to 0.83), $P<0.0001$], and WC [β : 1.07 cm, 95%CI (0.24 to 1.90), $P=0.011$] (Figure 1).
265 Participants with the *FTO* risk allele (A) had significantly higher odds of having overweight (OR:
266 1.27 (1.06 to 1.51), $P=0.007$) or obesity (OR: 1.41 (1.13 to 1.75); $P=0.003$) than individuals with
267 the T allele, but no significant association was found for central obesity (Table 2).

268 **Interaction between *FTO* genotype and PA levels on adiposity**

269 We found a significant interaction between *FTO* genotype and category of moderate-equivalent
270 PA on body weight, BMI and WC (Table 3 and Figure 2). The strength of the association
271 between *FTO* and body weight decreased with increasing moderate-equivalent PA: the

272 relationship declined from 3.53 kg (95%CI: 0.93 to 6.11) per copy of the *FTO* risk allele in
273 participants with lower levels of PA (<150 min.week⁻¹) to -0.28 kg (95%CI: -1.48 to 0.91) in
274 participants with higher levels of PA (>300 min.week⁻¹), as shown in Table 3 and Figure 2.
275 Similar results were found for BMI (lower PA: 1.06 kg.m⁻² vs higher PA: 0.16 kg.m⁻² per copy of
276 the risk allele, $P_{(\text{interaction})}=0.020$) and WC (lower PA: 2.72 cm vs higher PA: -0.49 cm per copy of
277 the risk allele, $P_{(\text{interaction})}=0.005$). When the relationship between *FTO* genotype and other PA
278 domains (vigorous, moderate and light intensity PA) were studied, we observed significant
279 interactions between *FTO**vigorous intensity PA (Table S1 and Figure S1) and *FTO**moderate
280 intensity PA (Table S2 and Figure S2) on body weight, BMI and WC. However, no significant
281 *FTO**light intensity PA interactions were identified (Table S3 and Figure S3). Although there
282 were no significant interactions between *FTO* genotype and sedentary behaviour on obesity
283 measures (body weight, BMI and WC), these increased with increasing time spent in sedentary
284 behaviour (Table S4 and Figure S4). The effect size of *FTO* on BMI and WC was 60% and 320%
285 greater in individuals with longer, than shorter, time spent in sedentary behaviour, respectively.
286 When additional analyses were performed and PA was included in the interaction models as a
287 continuous variable, we saw a similar trend for the interaction effect between *FTO* and PA-
288 related variables but these interaction were no longer significant ($P>0.05$) for any of the
289 outcomes. Additionally, no association were found between PA variables and *FTO* genotype
290 (Table S6). Sensitivity analysis where participants of non-white ethnic origin (<3%) were
291 removed from the analysis did not modify any of our findings.

292 **Discussion**

293 **Main findings**

294 Our main findings are that, on average, each additional copy of the *FTO* risk allele at rs9939609
295 was associated with significant increases in body weight, BMI and WC of 1.09 kg, 0.54 kg.m⁻²
296 and 1.07 cm, respectively. Consistently, each copy of the risk allele increased the odds of having
297 overweight or obesity by 32%. Our results provide further evidence to support the interplay
298 between genes and lifestyle. We showed that the effect sizes of the *FTO* associations on BMI
299 and WC for active individuals (moderate-equivalent PA >300 min.week⁻¹) were 85% and 118%
300 lower, respectively, than for inactive individuals (moderate-equivalent PA <150 min.week⁻¹).
301 These findings emphasise the importance of PA in the prevention of obesity especially in
302 subjects carrying the *FTO* risk allele.

303

304 **Comparison with other studies**

305 Our results are consistent with the findings of previous studies showing associations between
306 *FTO* variants and obesity-related traits (10, 28, 29). Although the effect size of the *FTO*
307 rs9939609 is relatively modest, it is consistent across studies conducted in Caucasian
308 populations (10, 28, 29, 30, 31). Our *FTO* effect size estimates are in agreement with previous
309 findings where each copy of the risk allele was associated with an increase in adiposity
310 measures ranging from 0.76 to 2.4 cm for WC, and from 0.31 to 0.66 kg.m⁻² for BMI, which is
311 equivalent to ~1.3 to 2.1 kg in body weight for an individual 1.80 m tall (8, 9, 10, 28, 30).
312 Similarly, the odds of having overweight or obesity reported in previous studies ranged from
313 ~1.19 to 1.69 per additional copy of the risk allele (8, 9, 10, 28, 29), which is in agreement with

314 our estimates (OR: 1.27 (1.06 to 1.51) for overweight and OR: 1.41 (1.13 to 1.75) for obesity per
315 copy of the risk allele).

316 Furthermore, our study suggests that an active lifestyle may attenuate the *FTO* genetic
317 susceptibility to obesity (19, 20, 32, 33). A meta-analysis of cross-sectional studies, including
318 218,166 adults (19), reported a significant *FTO**PA interaction ($P=0.001$), where the minor A
319 *FTO* allele of the rs9939609 variant increased the odds of being obese less in physically active
320 individuals [OR: 1.22 (95%CI 1.19-1.25)] than among inactive individuals (OR: 1.30 (1.24-1.36)].
321 Moreover, the latter meta-analysis reported that the association of the *FTO* genotype with BMI
322 and WC was attenuated in physically active individuals (0.32 kg.m⁻² and 0.68 cm per copy of the
323 risk allele, respectively) compared with inactive individuals (0.46 kg.m⁻² and 1.01 cm per copy of
324 the risk allele). Although our study showed qualitatively similar findings, we observed a bigger
325 attenuation by PA of the effect of *FTO* on obesity-related traits. This quantitative difference
326 between studies may be explained by the relative precision of PA measurements.

327 Our results are based on objectively measured PA data whereas the earlier meta-analysis (19)
328 used primarily SR PA data. SR PA can be subject to optimistic bias leading to PA overestimation
329 (34). Furthermore, SR PA is prone to random error, which leads to regression dilution bias (35).
330 This can obscure the true effect of PA on the interplay between genes and environment (36).
331 Moreover, the use of categories of PA may provide better knowledge of the dose-response
332 relationship between *FTO* genotype and PA on adiposity, which may assist in identifying the
333 minimum amount of PA necessary to overcome the genetic effect of *FTO* genotype on obesity-
334 related traits. We found that the influence of the *FTO* risk allele on BMI was 36% and 84% lower
335 in individuals achieving between 150-300 min.week⁻¹ or above 300 min.week⁻¹ of moderate

336 equivalent PA, respectively, than in inactive individuals (<150 min.week⁻¹). The attenuating
337 effect of PA on *FTO* related adiposity was similar when WC was used as an outcome (the *FTO*
338 risk allele effect on WC was 1.5 and 6.5-fold lower for active and highly active individuals than
339 in inactive individuals).

340 Although previous studies have reported a significant *FTO**PA interaction (20, 30, 31, 32, 33,
341 37), most of these studies used SR PA (19). Objectively measured PA allowed us to investigate
342 whether sedentary behaviours or other PA domains, such as light, moderate and vigorous
343 intensity PA, modulate the effect of the *FTO* genotype on obesity-related traits. We identified
344 that achieving between 10 to 90 minutes of vigorous PA per week mitigated the effect of *FTO*
345 genotype on obesity measures. However, higher levels of moderate intensity PA appear to be
346 needed (150 to 300 min.week⁻¹) to achieve similar attenuating effects on the association
347 between *FTO* genotype and obesity.

348 The mechanism how the *FTO* gene may have an impact on obesity outcomes remains unclear.
349 Recent evidence suggests that genetic variants within introns 1 and 2 of *FTO* may change the
350 basic function of human adipocytes from substrate storage to fuel utilization through enhanced
351 thermogenesis (38). Claussnitzer et al. proposed that noncoding variants in *FTO* influence the
352 thermogenic capacity of beige cells, which results in phenotypic differences in BMI. They
353 identified a large enhancer region in the *FTO* locus of adipocytes that has long-range control
354 over two homeobox regulatory genes, *IRX3* and *IRX5*, and demonstrated cell-autonomous
355 effects of these genes by means of genetic knockdown of *IRX3* and *IRX5* to restore
356 thermogenesis in adipocytes from persons at high genetic risk for obesity. In contrast,
357 overexpression of these proteins in adipocytes from persons without this genetic risk resulted

358 in decreased mitochondrial function and thermogenesis (38). Some attempts have been made
359 to explain the relationship between *FTO* and PA energy expenditure (39), but there is
360 inconclusive evidence on whether this may be due to epistatic gene interactions with other
361 genes that may control PA or dietary intake, or to gene-environment interaction (39).

362 The strengths of our study include the objective measure of PA in a large European cohort,
363 which is important because the identification of convincing gene-lifestyle interactions requires
364 accurate measures of the environmental exposure (18) to make them as robust basis for public
365 health action. Moreover, our estimate of PA allowed us to create categories of PA domains
366 which revealed the dose-response relationship for gene-environment interaction. A potential
367 limitation of our study is that anthropometric data were self-measured and self-reported via
368 the internet, which may have introduced measurement error. Nonetheless, the accuracy of
369 internet-based, self-reported anthropometric data is high (40) and this has been confirmed in
370 our study (23). However, we cannot completely discard any confounding effect of self-reported
371 data on our main outcomes. Another factor that should be considered as a limitation is the lack
372 of information on relatedness of the individuals. Additionally, when interactions between
373 *FTO* and PA were assessed by fitting PA as a continuous variable in the interaction term, the
374 trend remained similar but the interactions were no longer statistically significant ($P > 0.05$).
375 A larger sample size will be needed to confirm our findings using PA as a continuous
376 variable. Furthermore, by design, we recruited individuals interested in taking part in a
377 personalized intervention on nutrition and lifestyle, which is less representative than a
378 European-wide survey. Nonetheless, our participants were broadly representative of the
379 European adult population, most of whom had adequate nutrient intakes but could benefit
380 from improved dietary choices and greater PA [41]

381

382 Implications of findings

383 Considering the current prevalence of overweight and obesity worldwide (4), our findings are
384 highly relevant for improving public health. They emphasise that PA may be a particularly
385 effective way of controlling body weight in individuals with a genetic predisposition towards
386 obesity and thus contrast with the deterministic view that genetic influences are unmodifiable.
387 The apparent effect of an active lifestyle on genetic predisposition to obesity (~4kg differences
388 in the *FTO*-related effect size on body mass for inactive vs active individuals) is large enough to
389 be clinically relevant. Evidence of such gene–lifestyle interactions may empower and motivate
390 individuals to adopt healthier lifestyle behaviours through knowledge that such behaviour
391 change can be effective in preventing obesity and, therefore, risk of obesity-related non-
392 communicable diseases. Gene*environment interactions for cardio-metabolic phenotypes
393 involve physical activity more often than any other lifestyle factor, including dietary fat intakes
394 (16).

395 In conclusion, despite the fact that *FTO* genotype is robustly associated with BMI and WC, our
396 results show that higher PA attenuates this genetic predisposition to obesity-related traits.
397 These finding are relevant for public health and suggest that promoting PA, particularly in those
398 who are genetically susceptible, is an important strategy for addressing the current obesity
399 epidemic.

400

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404

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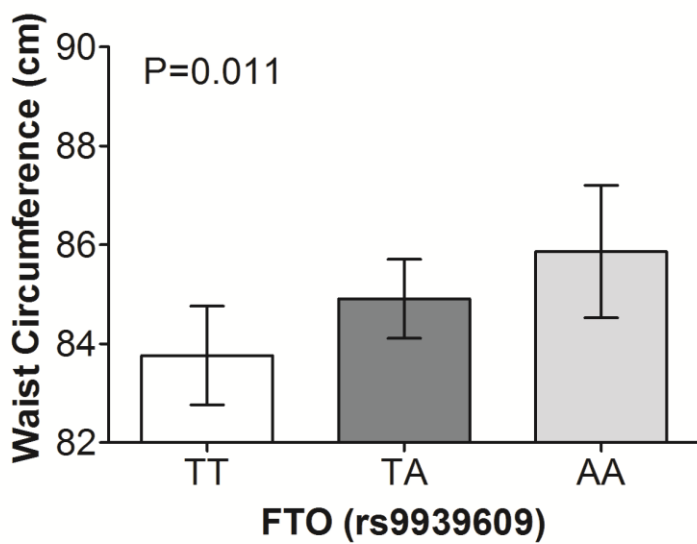
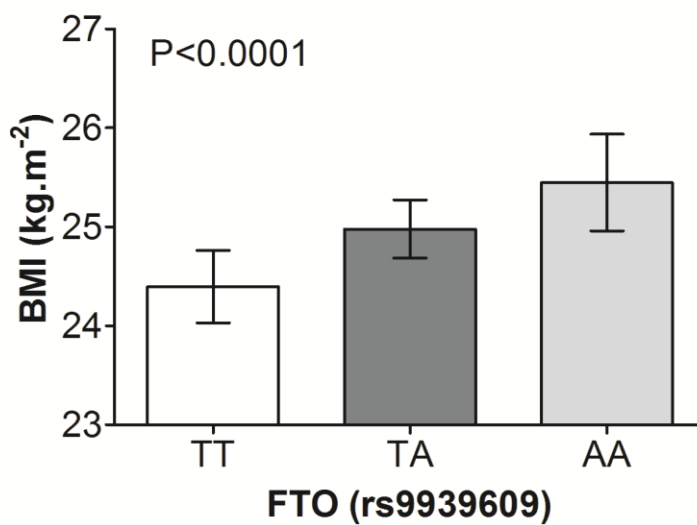
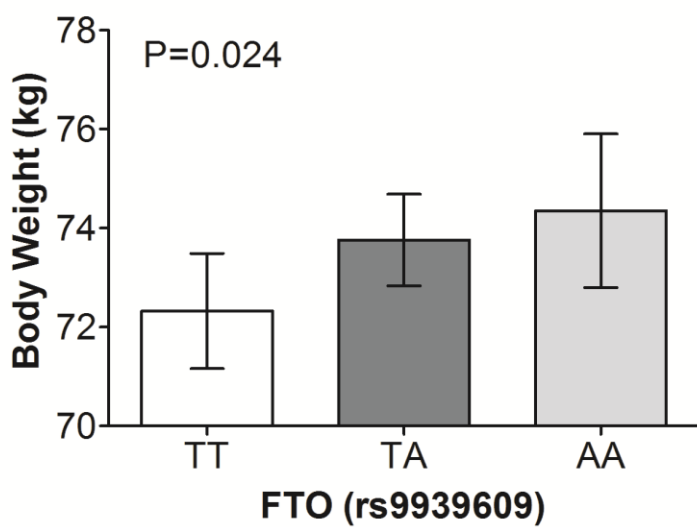
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549 FIGURES LEGEND



551 **Figure 1. Association between FTO rs9939609 genotype and adiposity measures.**

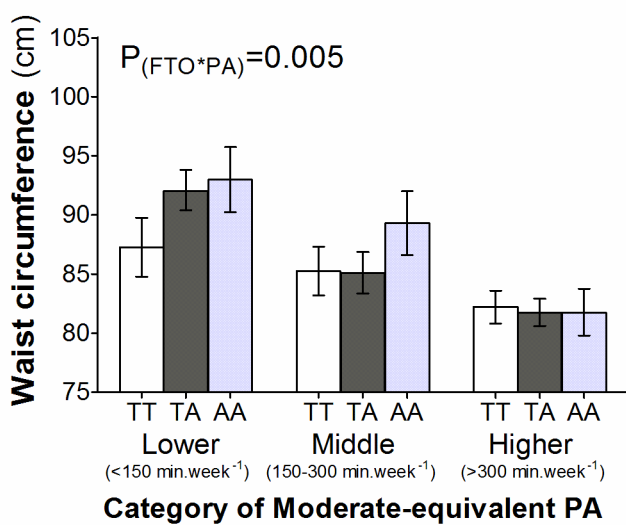
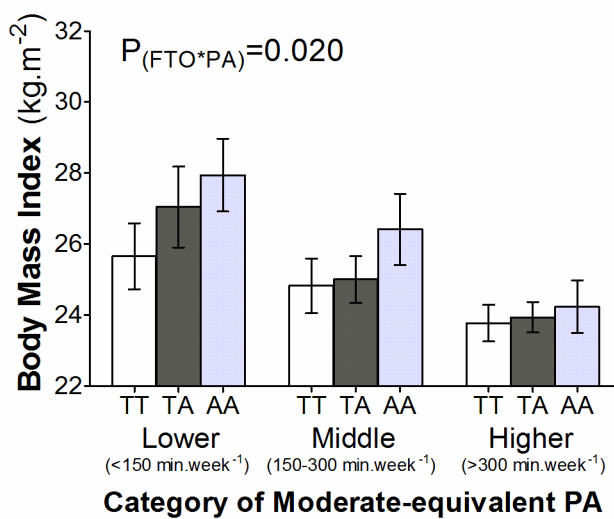
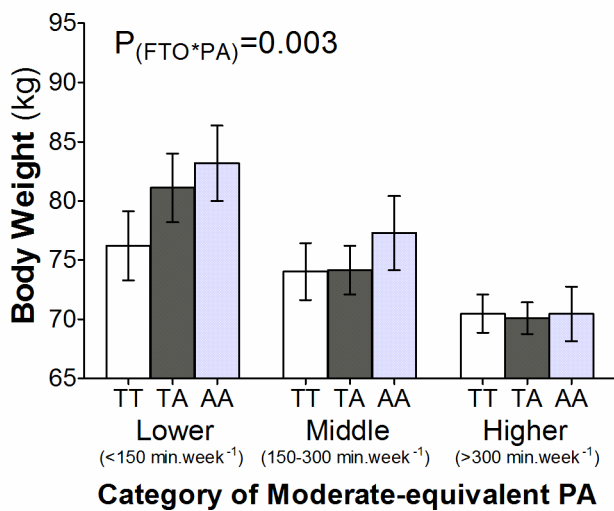
552 Least-squares means of genotypes were calculated by using Robust Linear Regression, with

553 adjustment for age, sex and country.

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558 **Figure 2. Effect of the FTO rs9939609 genotype on adiposity-measures by category of**
559 **moderate-equivalent physical activity.**

560 P values are for the interaction between the FTO variant and PA category; Least-squares means
561 of different genotypes across all PA groups were calculated by using Robust Linear Regression
562 Analysis, with adjustment for age, sex, country, monitor wear time and season. Allele frequency
563 by PA category were (Lower: 71/158/59; Middle: 103/142/61; Upper: 231/342/113) for TT, TA
564 and AA genotypes, respective.

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576 **Table 1. Characteristics of Food4Me Study participants**

| Variables | Overall | Men | Women |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| n | 1280 | 537 | 743 |
| Age (years) | 39.9 (13.0) | 41.6 (13.4) | 38.7 (12.5) |
| Anthropometric | | | |
| Height (m) | 1.71 (0.09) | 1.79 (0.07) | 1.65 (0.06) |
| Body weight (kg) | 74.7 (15.8) | 83.4 (13.5) | 68.5 (14.3) |
| BMI (kg.m ⁻²) | 25.5 (4.8) | 26.1 (4.1) | 24.9 (5.2) |
| Underweight (<18.5 kg.m ⁻² ; %) | 2.6 | 0.8 | 3.8 |
| Normal weight (≥18.5 to <25.0 kg.m ⁻² ; %) | 51.3 | 44.7 | 56.0 |
| Overweight (≥25.0 to <30.0 kg.m ⁻² ; %) | 30.3 | 38.4 | 24.6 |
| Obese (≥30.0 kg.m ⁻² ; %) | 15.8 | 16.1 | 15.6 |
| Waist Circumference (cm) | 85.7 (13.8) | 92.7 (12.1) | 80.7 (12.8) |
| Central obesity* (%) | 24.3 | 22.8 | 25.6 |
| Physical Activity | | | |
| PAL | 1.73 (0.18) | 1.74 (0.2) | 1.72 (0.2) |
| Sedentary time (min.day ⁻¹) | 744.8 (76.6) | 738.9 (82.3) | 749.1 (71.5) |
| Light PA (min.day ⁻¹) | 73.9 (30.4) | 74.0 (29.8) | 73.9 (30.9) |
| Moderate PA (min.day ⁻¹) | 33.3 (20.4) | 37.3 (21.1) | 30.3 (19.4) |
| Vigorous PA (min.day ⁻¹) | 11.8 (16.1) | 16.7 (18.1) | 8.17 (13.1) |
| Moderate-equivalent PA (min.day ⁻¹) | 56.9 (45.0) | 70.9 (49.1) | 46.7 (38.4) |
| Moderate-equivalent PA 10min bouts (min.day ⁻¹) | 29.2 (32.3) | 36.5 (35.9) | 23.8 (28.1) |
| Active individuals (≥150 min.week ⁻¹ moderate-equivalent PA in bouts; %) | 47.0 | 56.5 | 40.0 |

577 Data presented as Mean (SD) for continuous variables and as % for categorical variables.

578 PAL - Physical activity level. *Central obesity was defined as WC >88 cm for women and >102
579 cm for men.

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