



## Sixty seconds on . . . doughnuts

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The BMJ

### Mmmm, doughnuts . . .

Yes, they are a tasty snack—but these sweet treats have caused a bit of a stir on social media recently.

### Hole-d on, what's happened?

The whole debacle kicked off when cardiologist Aseem Malhotra responded to a tweet from the Royal Free London which was thanking Krispy Kreme for a delivery of 1500 doughnuts for staff at their Barnet Hospital.<sup>1</sup>

### So his response wasn't sugar coated?

Not quite. He called the tweet “absolutely disgraceful” and added, “Feeding junk food to already overweight and obese NHS staff? I will forward this to CEO of NHS England Simon Stevens personally and I can assure you he won't be impressed especially as these foods are a root cause of increased death rates from covid-19.”<sup>2</sup>

### Did people go [dough]nuts?

You could say that. There have been strong opinions on both sides of the debate. On Team Doughnut, junior doctor Toby Morris tweeted, “Let us enjoy a cup of tea and a doughnut at a time of crisis.” While retired surgeon Chris Oliver said, “I tried very unsuccessfully to stop the sale of junk food at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh when I was working.”

### But doughnuts are bad for you, right?

They are, but Partha Kar, a national specialty advisor on diabetes with NHS England, says that now isn't the time to pick on NHS staff's eating habits. “There's a time and a place for everything. I can see where Aseem is coming from but these are extraordinary times where people are looking for a break.” He added, “I think this does more harm than good.”

### You're right, let them eat doughnuts!

Not so fast. Malholtra says that his tweet wasn't attacking individuals, but rather the system. “I believe hospitals should be setting an example on healthy food.” He also warns that retailers are exploiting the current crisis as a branding opportunity. “And the argument that one doughnut isn't going to kill you, you could also say the same about cigarettes,” he adds. “It's about legitimising the acceptability of these products.”

### Now I'm really confused.

Doughnut worry, we all are.

- 1 Royal Free London. 21 April 2020. [twitter.com/RoyalFreeNHS/status/1252576924628631557](https://twitter.com/RoyalFreeNHS/status/1252576924628631557).
- 2 Dr Aseem Malhotra. 22 April 2020. [twitter.com/DrAseemMalhotra/status/1252861958652452864](https://twitter.com/DrAseemMalhotra/status/1252861958652452864).

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