Why you stress-eat and how to stop it

Reacting to stress by eating junk food or skipping your workouts can actually make stress worse.

You know what it is: stress eating. It’s perfectly human to want to avoid pain and seek relief. Stress eating usually happens when you want to disconnect from the moment. It’s like changing the channel in our brain to try to change how we feel. Here’s why food is such a salve for stress – and how to stop the cycle.

This is why you turn to food when you’re stressed:

It’s no surprise if you suddenly feel famished when deadlines or crisis strikes. Stress activates your adrenal glands to release cortisol, increasing your appetite. Stress also impedes hunger hormones, like ghrelin, that regulate your appetite, research shows. If the anxiety is cutting into your sleep, a lack of zzz’s ramps up your appetite even more.

Unfortunately, that anxiety-induced hunger can have long-term consequences for your waistline. In fact, one new study found that women who reported they were stressed burned fewer calories and fat, and had a higher insulin response after eating a higher fat meal. Published in the journal Biological Psychiatry, the researchers concluded that these stress-included changes led women to burn about 100 fewer calories per day – a difference that could cause you to pack on 11 pounds in a year.

When you’re under stress, you often feel out of control and overwhelmed – and that can leak to your eating habits. So it’s no surprise that you go after junk food like a hungry lion, rather than keeping up your normally healthy habits. You’re worried about the past or the future - not what you’re eating in the present.

Stress depletes the cognitive resources you need to remain focused and resilient, and to practice creative problem solving. That’s why getting elbow-deep in the pint of mint chip always feels easier than actually coming up with a plan for how to tackle that super tough work project.
While it’s too bad you don’t crave celery sticks and carrots during crazed moments that would go against biology, fries, snack mixes, cookies and ice cream are go-to because these high-carbs, high-fat eats increase the brain’s feel-good dopamine response. Then, next time you get into a bind you’ll hear the siren song of chocolate chips because your noggin has come to expect the rewarding hit of dopamine – and knows where to find it.

Not only that, but it’s easy for stress snacking to become an ingrained habit. A 2015 study in The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism discovered that one reason we eat high sugar foods is because sugar dampens stress-induced cortisol responses. Translation: You feel better on a sugar high. Over time, your brain may start to rely on these foods to simmer down.

How to stop stress eating

Ready to break free from stress eating and bring back happiness to your eats? Try some of these simple tricks next time anxiety strikes.

1. Focus on the real issue.
   We all know food is just a crutch when we’re stressed. Stress eating is not the primary problem, but a symptom of unmet needs.

2. Think long-term.
   Take a minute to focus on the future before you give in to stress eating. It can help get out of the moment so you make healthier food choices instead of succumbing to the lure of a tasty treat, suggests a 2014 study.

3. Get mindful.
   In a study in the Journal of Obesity, women who underwent mindfulness training – learning stress reduction techniques, how to recognize hunger, and pay attention to taste – were less apt to stress eat and lost more belly fat compared to a control group. Next time you’re feeling taxed, try this exercise. You’ll learn to identify your feelings, accept the unpleasant ones and focus on your breathing so you can fight the automatic urge to reach for a snack.

4. Be kind to yourself.
   Self-compassion can decrease stress eating. When you’re a kind, understanding friend to yourself, it’s easier to resist the urge to try to disconnect through stress eating. If you do stress eat, promise that you won’t beat yourself up and understand that it happens to everyone sometimes. That can help stop you from eating out of failure and help you make better choices later.

5. If all else fails…
   Go ahead and indulge. Food is a lovely, comforting thing. Of course, do so in moderation. Plan on savoring a small brownie rather than the whole batch.

Foods that double as medicine

A typical visit to the doctor might leave you with a bottle of pills and instructions to take them twice daily. But a small number of physicals are prescribing foods not only for weight management, but also to prevent and treat chronic diseases.

While one food might be recommended as treatment for a specific ailment, it’s important to remember that a single food item doesn’t work in isolation.

True nutrition experts prefer to speak about dietary patterns or groups of foods as nutrition in foods work in combination to improve certain condition.

**Buckwheat honey for a cough**

Buckwheat honey is better than cough syrup for nocturnal cough in kids. Derived from bee nectar of flowers of the buckwheat grain, Buckwheat honey might eventually make its way into every parent’s medicine cabinet.

Buckwheat honey is better than cough syrup for nocturnal cough in kids. This is especially useful food-as-medicine for children under 6 but older than age 1, who are ill-advised to take over-the-counter cough medicine.

**Pickled foods for diarrhea**

Fermented foods include yoghurt, kefir, pickled vegetables, miso, kimchi, and poi. These foods contain living bacteria that help maintain the health of the digestive tract.

These bacteria-filled foods can be used to prevent and treat antibiotic-associated diarrhea, irritable bowel syndrome, infantile diarrhea, eczema and allergies. But the hottest use of fermented foods is to burn stubborn fat.

A study from 2012 that reviewed data from 82 clinical trials found probiotic foods were indeed effective at treating antibiotic-associated diarrhea. However, the data for using probiotics as a treatment for eczema are mixed. Some research found supporting evidence while other studies did not.

**Ginger for menstrual cramps**

Ginger is a pungent spice originating from Southeast Asia.

Ginger could also be a helpful food-as-medicine for women. Ginger probably works as well as ibuprofen for menstrual cramps. It works taken as a ginger capsule or chewed.

One scientific review of seven clinical trials found that 750 to 2000 milligrams of ginger powder taken during the first four days of menstrual cycle was an effective treatment for cramps.
Peppermint for IBS
Think beyond candy canes and chewing gum. Peppermint is also found in supplement, essential oil and tea forms. When used to help treat abdominal cramping and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).
Peppermint oil is effective -- and could be the first line of treatment -- against irritable bowel syndrome, according to a 2005 scientific review of 16 clinical trials.

Hibiscus tea for high blood pressure
Hibiscus tea has a greater anti-hypertensive effects than blueberries. Infused as an herbal tea, hibiscus flowers contain anthocyanin's, which could help to lower blood pressure. The steeples of the flower are dried and made into a tea drink, has a tart cranberry taste.
Multiple studies back up the blood-pressure-lowering abilities of hibiscus, including one published in the Nigerian Journal of Physiological Sciences.

Turmeric for arthritis
Native to southwest India, turmeric has a warm, bitter flavor.
Turmeric is used especially for brain-related conditions and to decrease the risk of Alzheimer’s disease. It can also be used for arthritis.
Add black pepper to turmeric to maximize the disease-fighting benefits. This helps your body absorb more of the curcumin, which is the active ingredient in turmeric that delivers the positive health effects.
Indeed, an article published in the Journal Food and Chemical Toxicology explains the various disease-fighting benefits of turmeric.

Chia seeds for high cholesterol
Despite their tiny size, chia seeds are nutrient-defense and often labeled as a “super food.”
It is recommended to patients with high LDL cholesterol as a bonus to other healthy food choices.
It could lead to great results just adding chia seeds to an already healthy diet for lowering cholesterol.

Steel-cut oatmeal for high LDL cholesterol
This is a no-brainer for lowering LDL if you haven’t tried anything else. There are lots of studies showing that foods high in soluble fiber lower LDL cholesterol.
One such study found that eating at least 3 grams of oats daily is associated with lower LDL cholesterol levels.
Try mixing in a spoonful of chia seeds to maximize the cholesterol-lowering impact.
Beans for high blood sugar levels
Beans are useful in lowering blood sugar levels and managing high cholesterol. And because they're loaded with fiber, beans can help induce that “full” feeling to help with weight loss. It could certainly show improvements in blood sugar with encouraging more fiber-rich foods like beans that are also rich in magnesium, but it is harder to isolate that effect alone.

Salmon for inflammation
With its oink-orange hue and distinct smell, salmon is one of the best dietary sources of omega-3 fatty acids. These essential fats are an important part of treating any inflammatory or autoimmune condition. It also is recommended to those dealing with high triglyceride levels, metabolic syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis or MS. Most people think food can’t possibly be as potent as drugs, but it has the powerful direct benefits all the time.


Spicy foods may help you live longer, says a new study
Hot, hot, hot foods are the focus of new research released this week suggesting that eating fiery ingredients such as chill peppers may do more than burn your tongue. These foods may help you live longer. There is accumulating evidence from mostly experimental research to show the benefits of spices or their active components on human health.

As result, researchers from the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences studied data collected from 2004 to 2008 as part of the China Kadoorie Bio bank. Using self-reported questionnaires, they analyzed the spicy food consumption of nearly half a million people age 30 to 70 across 10 regions in China, excluding those with cancer, heart disease and stroke.

They then reviewed the records of 20,224 people who died over seven-year follow-up period and found that those who ate spicy foods six or seven times a week had a 14% lower risk of premature death for all causes than people who ate spicy foods less than once a week. People who frequently consumed spicy food also showed a lower risk of death from cancer or ischemic heart and respiratory system diseases. Fresh and dried chili peppers were the most common spicy sources, according to the study.
What is it about spicy foods? The study points to the benefits of capsaicin, a bioactive ingredient in chili peppers, which has been linked to health perks such as increased fat burning. Folk medicine practitioners also say capsaicin can help fight infection and stimulate the kidneys, lungs and heart. Then, there’s the old wives tale that says eating spicy food will induce labor (although there’s no scientific evidence supporting this claim).

There are also a few risks associated with eating spicy foods. There are certain foods that are triggered for people with incontinence or overactive bladders, including spicy foods, which doctors have identified as common irritants for women.

Spicy foods can also aggravate colds or sinus infections, increasing your runny nose.

The new research found an association between death and spicy food consumption but an editorial published with the study cautions that this is not definitive. As a result, experts emphasize the need for more research before a connection between these ingredients can be scientifically established.

The study itself limitations including the lack of information about other dietary and lifestyles habits or how spicy food was cooked or prepared. In addition, researchers note that although chili pepper was the most commonly used spice based on self-reports, the use of different spices tends to increase as the use of chili pepper increases. Consuming these other spices may also result in health benefits, independent of chilies.

The fact that there seems to be an overall protective effect in chili intake especially interesting.

Now, scientists need to figure out why this benefit is occurring.

A biological connection could mean that when you eat spicy food, thermogenesis occurs, increasing the basal metabolic rate. While a behavior mechanism could be that eating spicy foods slows food intake, causing a person to eat fewer calories. A lower calorie consumption could indicate a more healthful diet, which would be an unaccounted variable not shown by the new study.

Source: http://cnn.com/2015/08/05/health/spicy-foods-may-help-you-live-longer--says-a-new-study
5 Health Conditions that Raise the Risk of Heart Disease

Though you might see a cardiologist for your heart troubles and a dentist for your gum disease, your body’s systems are interconnected. Seemingly unrelated diseases that affect your skin, brain, or mouth can cause changes that eventually threaten your heart.

Luckily, the reverse is also true. Steps that improve heart health, including exercising and eating healthy diet, can also help prevent and treat many other illnesses. Here are six conditions that can place your heart in peril—and how you can reduce your risk.

1. **Arthritis**
   More than 46 million Americans currently have arthritis. And more than half of those people also have heart disease. Being overweight raises your risk of both heart diseases and osteoarthritis, the most common type of arthritis. Rheumatoid arthritis, which occurs when your body’s immune system attacks membranes within the joints, is associated with an increased risk of heart attack and strokes.

   Lifestyle changes that soothe joint pain may also keep your heart healthy. You might be afraid that exercise will worsen your aches. But give it a try you’ll likely find that physical activity eases arthritis symptoms as it prevents heart diseases. Exercise also contributes to more restful sleep. Eating a nutritious diet, including omega-3 fatty acids like those found in some fish, may reduce swelling in the joints and help protect blood vessels.

2. **Depression**
   If you had any doubt that depression was a disease and not a character flaw, consider this. The condition has been linked to about one-fifth of new heart disease diagnoses. The disease seems to feed off one another. People who are depressed after a cardiac event heal more slowly and are at risk for future heart attacks and strokes.

   Treating depression improves both your emotional and physical health. Don’t be ashamed to ask your doctor about therapy, medications, or both. And if you already have heart diseases, be on the lookout for signs of depression. Such as feeling sad, disengaged and hopeless for at least two weeks.
3. **Diabetes**

Diabetes occurs when body either can’t make or can’t use insulin. This hormone drives glucose, or sugar, into the body’s cells, which, in turn, use the sugar for energy. Extra sugar in your blood over time can damage nerves and blood vessels, contributing to heart diseases. People with diabetes are twice as likely to have cardiovascular disease, and two-thirds of those affected will die from it.

Controlling your diabetes by keeping your blood sugar in check prevents this damage. Also, ask your doctor to check your blood pressure and blood cholesterol. If they’re high, he or she will help you take the steps to prevent further damage.

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4. **Psoriasis**

Red itchy, scaly skin is no fun to begin with. Now, doctors know that the harm of psoriasis goes more than skin deep. Recent studies have found that the condition is linked not only to heart disease, but also strokes and other blood vessel diseases. This could be because people with psoriasis are twice as likely to have metabolic syndrome, a cluster of conditions like obesity and high blood pressure that raise heart risks.

5. **Kidney Disease**

Your kidneys filter your blood and excess water, toxins and wastes. When damaged, they stop producing a hormone that regulates blood pressure, contributing to hypertension. People with end-stage kidney disease are 20 to 30 times more likely to develop cardiovascular disease. Even less severe cases of kidney disease double your risk for heart attack and stroke.

Health effects of coffee: Where do we stand?

It’s thumbs up today, but the news on coffee has not all been positive. Take a look at the arguments for and against its one of the age-old medical flip flops; First coffee’s good for you, then it’s not then it is – you get the picture.

Today, in 2015, the verdict is thumbs up, with study after study extolling the merits of three to five cups of black coffee a day in reducing risk for everything from melanoma to heart disease, multiple sclerosis, type 2 diabetes, Parkinson’s disease, liver disease, prostate cancer, Alzheimer’s, computer related back pain and more.

Coffee is practically a health food: Myth or fact?

To stay completely healthy with your coffee consumption, you’ll want to avoid packing it with calorie laden creams, sugar and flavors. And be aware that a cup of coffee in these studies is only 8 ounces; the standard “Grande” cup at the coffee shop is double that at 16 ounces.

And how you brew it has health consequences. Unlike filter makers, the French press, Turkish coffee or the boiled coffee popular in Scandinavian countries fail to catch a compound called cafestol in the oily part of coffee that can increase your bad cholesterol or LDL.

Finally, people with sleep issues or uncontrolled diabetes should check with a doctor before adding caffeine to their diets, as should pregnant women, as there is some concern about caffeine’s effect on fetal growth and miscarriage. And some of the latest research seems to say that our genes may be responsible for how we react to coffee, explaining why some of us need several cups to get a boost while others get the jitters on only one cup. But as you know, the news on coffee has not always been positive.
