

## Stress And Your Diet

Do you run to the snack drawer when you get stressed out? For many people there is a direct relationship between stress and the foods they eat. For many turning to snack foods in stressful situations is a method of comforting themselves, but what many don't realize is that what you are eating can also add to your stress.

Stress has more of a role in what we eat than many realize and a great deal of overeating can be attributed to stress. One common substance that we ingest which can be related to our stress levels is caffeine. Caffeine is not only found in coffee but is also in tea, soda and chocolate. Caffeine can add to your stress by elevating your heart rate as well as your blood pressure. Cutting out caffeine may help you reduce stress, but it is advised to cut back gradually to avoid suffering the ill effects of withdrawal.

Some people turn to alcohol when they get stressed but alcohol can actually increase stress. Alcohol can make your body produce adrenaline which can affect your sleep. Drinking alcohol can make you tense and can interfere with your body's immune system.

One common comfort food that many stressed out people turn to is sugar. Who hasn't ripped open a candy bar after a stressful work day? While it may seem like this is comforting you, it can actually make you feel more stressed. This is because sugar can affect the adrenal glands which can lead to depression and irritability. Fatty foods go hand in hand with sugar and fat can strain the cardiovascular system leading to more stress on your system.

Typically people either turn to sugar or salt for snack foods but eating salty foods is no better on your system. Salt raises blood pressure and can cause you to feel out of control with your emotions. If you are already stressed out this can compound your feelings.

If you want to control stress, you should take a good look at what you are eating. Try eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole foods. These foods will naturally help you fight stress and are filled with nutrients that will help your overall health. In addition, eating healthy won't pack on the pounds thus allowing you to avoid the stress of weight gain. In order to get the maximum amount of nutrients, aim to eat the majority of your fruits and vegetables raw as some important vitamins and enzymes can be lost during cooking.

How can you tell if your diet is adding to your stress? Pay attention to any warning signs. Do you experience headaches after eating? Are you having neck or back pain? Do you get irritable after dinner? Are you feeling anxious for no reason? If you answer "yes" to any of these, you might have food induced stress. While fighting this with better food choices, also make sure that you get at least seven hours of sleep each night in order to ensure that you are well-rested. Being tired can contribute significantly to your stress level.

There is no question that there is a connection between stress and your diet. Eating caffeine filled drinks and sugary foods will make you jittery and hyper as well as reduce your ability to concentrate and relax. On the other hand, meals loaded with vitamins and minerals will give you clarity of mind and give your body the ability to better handle any stressful situation that comes along.

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### About the Author

Lee Dobbins writes for [www.better-self.com](http://www.better-self.com) where you can learn more about self help and self improvement. Read more on how to handle stress at [www.better-self.com/stress-articles.html](http://www.better-self.com/stress-articles.html)