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# Weighing In July 2016 Newsletter

## Are You a Slave or Addicted to Food?

This month we have answered many questions in our office about food disorders. Many people don't realize how addicted they are to food or types of foods. Science is working on understanding and finding treatment for food addiction. One patient came in this month and told me "I am a slave to chocolate."

I started thinking about how many patients over the years have complained about being addicted to certain foods. So I went back and reviewed a few charts to come up with some ideas that relate to food addiction. Experiments in animals and humans show addictive drugs trigger patients reward and pleasure center of the brain just like cocaine and heroin. They are also activated by certain food groups such as highly palatable foods that are rich in sugars, fat, and salt.

Just like addictive drugs, delicious foods trigger a good feeling in brain chemistry such as dopamine. Once you experience the pleasure associated with increasing dopaminergic transmission, the brain's reward center pathways to certain foods create the need to eat them again and again and again.

Thoughts of food trigger our feeling and emotions. Thinking about the box of crackers or the Hershey bar is tied to positive emotional experiences. When we think about these foods, it triggers a desire to feel that positivity again and by eating these foods, the dopaminergic reward center signals fullness and satisfaction.

Unfortunately for those who have food addictions, the signaling doesn't work quite as well. These patients keep eating the same thing even when they're not hungry and never feel a real sense of satisfaction.

Patients who show food addiction also develop a tolerance for the same food. They will eat more and more, only to find that the food satisfies them less and less.

Recent studies show that food addiction may play a significant role in trying to figure out what causes obesity. Although average weight people may also struggle with food addiction, something in them is genetically programmed to make them handle the extra calories better, or they may just change the physical activity to compensate for what they eat.

Patients who are addicted to foods will continue to eat despite negative consequences, such as weight gain, damage to their personal lives, or comorbidities that go along with obesity. Researchers at Yale University's Rudd Center for Food and Science Policy Institute developed a questionnaire to identify people with food addictions:



1. Do you end up eating more than planned when you start eating particular types of foods?
2. Do you keep eating certain foods even when you're no longer hungry?
3. Do you eat to the point of feeling ill?
4. Do you worry about not eating certain types of foods or worry about cutting down on certain types of foods?
5. When the certain foods are not available, do you go out of your way to obtain them?

Researchers then gave respondents a questionnaire about the psychological withdrawal symptoms participants experienced. For example; they asked: "When you cut down on certain foods excluding caffeinated beverages, do you have any of the following symptoms or physical complaints:

1. Anxiety or depression
2. Increased Agitation
3. Self Loathing or Guilt

Food addiction is just on the same plateau as alcohol addiction or drugs. Example alcoholics can abstain from drinking alcohol. But people who addicted to food still need to eat. Some physicians refer patients to a clinical psychologist who deal only with food addiction.

There is a growing number of programs that will help people who are addicted to food. There's a 12 step program sponsored by Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous.

The central theme of most addictive programs makes you stop and wait for your emotional part your brain to subside before taking on the action that was controlling you. The emotional part of our brain is always the stronger than the rational part of our brain. Stopping for your sound mind to start to energize. It is one of the wisest things you can do when you feel emotionally overwhelmed and wanting to eat that one thing. Many of our patients over the years of found putting a 3 x 5 card in their cabinets and in the refrigerator asking this question, "why are you here?" There's something about making yourself accountable. This changes us.

I have a patient who has been on multiple psychiatric medication for many years. I told her if we got rid of her weight, a lot of her emotional baggage would go away. She lost 106 pounds and most of her psychological depression and anxiety dissipated.

However, this patient was someone that wasn't happy unless she was helping solve other people's problems. She would quickly defend somebody else and carry their burden. If she knew someone hurt, she felt betrayed in some way and would react by coming to their defense. Over the past year, she has gained most of her weight back.

Why do you ask? Well, if you go back to doing the same thing you were doing before, you're going to expect some different changes right? No! It's not going to happen. This patient started eating the same things that caused her to gain her weight originally. She would never take responsibility for this and steadily blamed someone or something else. She blamed the program, she blamed the wedding, the funeral, the baby shower... She became more and more despondent and was back on her antidepressant drugs again. This unfortunately led to more weight gain and ultimately led to her discontinuing the Weigh Station program and her accountability. (continued on pg 3)

You must take responsibility for actions, we cannot control others, but we can control how we choose to respond to others. When we blame others for our emotional reactions, we give of ourselves a message that we are unable to decide for ourselves. So, taking on the offense of someone else or yourself never amounts to much.

You are not your emotions, and your emotions should not be a food group.

A great tactic is to try to imagine you are the driver of the bus and just as you put the key in the ignition, the passengers begin to tell you that you shouldn't drive a bus as you are a terrible driver and you may get lost or have an accident. Oh, by the way, you are looking old, and you are too fat in your driver's uniform. If you allow the passenger to control you, they are in charge of you. Just as a Hershey bar is not in control, the passengers aren't either. Just remember your emotions or "passengers on a bus" can interfere with your job. Just as the Hershey bar cannot control you. It is an inanimate object.

So the next time you go shopping and that box of "cookies" just happens to jump in your shopping cart look at it and say I'm not a slave to you. You're not a slave to chocolate, not a slave to doughnuts, or to Jell-O shooters. You're a child of the living God, and he can help you overcome your addictions, your judgmental attitudes, and your failures. Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 11 says "for I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and hope".

Stay faithful to yourselves, not to your addictions.

Be blessed

Chuck Shaffer MD

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## **Recipe of the Month Peach Salmon (revised from realsimple.com)**

Serves 4 | Hands-On Time: 10m | Total Time: 20m

### **Ingredients**

1 tablespoon rice vinegar  
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger  
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves  
4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
kosher salt and pepper  
2 medium red onions, cut into wedges  
4 small peaches, cut into wedges  
4 6-ounce salmon steaks (about 1 inch thick)

### **Directions**

Heat grill to medium-high. In a small bowl, combine the vinegar, ginger, thyme, 3 tablespoons of the oil, and ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Set aside. In a large bowl, gently toss the onions, peaches, remaining 1 tablespoon oil, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Season the salmon with ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Grill the salmon and onions until salmon is opaque throughout and onions are tender, 5 to 6 minutes per side. After flipping the salmon, place the peaches on the grill and cook until tender, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Drizzle the salmon with the vinaigrette and serve with the onions and peaches.

Provides ~ 5 ounces of salmon cooked and 1 fruit serving per portion.



## Health coaching 101

My name is Robert Ferrari and I am a health coach. I graduated from the certificate program at Duke Integrative Medicine, and then studied further with them to become a Duke IM Certified Integrative Health Coach. Duke training has served me well to meet the needs of a wide variety of clients and provide personalized plans. No cookie cutter approach here! Even in group sessions, every individual is treated as the unique person they are in order to address their unique needs.

Many people think of health coaching and think 1 of 2 things.

First, they think "He's just going to tell me what to eat and how to exercise". Nothing could be further from what health coaching is, as taught by Duke and practiced by myself.

I work closely to integrate all aspects of the person. Together, we focus on client chosen areas such as; movement and exercise, spirituality, mind-body connection, nutrition, personal and professional development, professional care, and relationships to name a few areas. People find working on goals in this integrated, wholistic manner fun and energizing, not tiresome and tedious.

I work with people in an ongoing manner, instead of once or twice a year, to support them as they make lasting changes to achieve their goals. Working in partnership, we can define your vision, work within your values, and achieve your goals.

Second, people think "I'm not so bad off as to need a coach". This misses the entire goal of coaching! Coaching isn't only for people who are at their last option, though it certainly can serve that function. Coaching is for people who want to be BETTER THAN THEIR CURRENT BEST! Many Fortune 500 CEO'S, people operating in the top 1% of their field, have coaches! The best athlete you can think of, has one or more coaches. Why? These people already live lives most of us can only dream about, so why hire a coach? Simple. These people realize a simple truth. What got a person where they are and gave them the level of success they currently enjoy, whether that level is fair, good, or fantastic, is NOT what is going to help them achieve their next goal. To continually transform as a human being requires tiny leaps of abilities OFTEN HIDDEN to ourselves without trained assistance.

That's what a health coach is. I'm a trained assistant bringing to light obstacles unseen by clients so they can be observed. Once an obstacle is uncovered and recognized it often turns into an aid or stepping stone to advance growth.

It will be my pleasure to work with people as they navigate the challenges of weight loss. Please visit my web site: [yourintegratedhealth.com](http://yourintegratedhealth.com) for more information as well as a contact form, or simply give me a call.

Robert Ferrari Integrative Health Coach  
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## What Your Cravings Are Trying to Tell You:

Patients come to The Weigh Station to learn how to eat the right way. As you know, phase one of our program involves removing all sugar from the diet. Unfortunately, no one is perfect and deviations can lead to cravings that get us off track. New research explains what cravings can tell us. Check out this article from Science Daily to learn more:

### **What do my cravings say about my health?**

After a stressful day, it's almost second nature to laze on the couch and drown our sorrows in a bowl of ice-cream or potato chips. Soon, we glance down and realize we've managed to consume the entire pint or bag. So, what makes these foods so irresistible -- causing us to mindlessly indulge? According to a Texas A&M Health Science Center registered dietitian, there's a difference in what you think your body craves and what it actually needs.

"Eating a recommended, balanced diet will cover most of your cravings," said Taylor Newhouse, registered dietitian, with the Texas A&M School of Public Health. However, as a society, we tend to avoid the green things on our plate and we miss out on key nutrients our body needs."

### **The insatiable sweet tooth**

Fluctuating blood sugar levels may be to blame if you immediately reach for sweet snacks. "As blood glucose (blood sugar) levels change throughout the day, the body tries to keep these levels stable," Newhouse said. "Still, this is counterproductive; consuming sugary foods will only feed this addiction and result in more cravings."

In fact, sugar releases endorphins within the body that make you feel happy or comfortable. Newhouse said this 'sugar high' can also lead to the overconsumption of simple carbohydrates and result in bingeing -- now considered an official eating disorder. "We tend to overconsume carbohydrates because they're easily digestible and give us the same boost as sugar," she said. "It's imperative we learn to replace that 'high' with a healthy activity we enjoy, like exercising."

However, it might not be smart to exercise too hard if you're trying to kick a craving. Intense exercise can also tell the body when carbohydrate stores have been depleted. If you're working out, and suddenly decide you need a burger on the way home, this is your body's way of saying it needs nutrients to recover.

"Incorporating more sweet fruits like berries or apples into your diet, along with dark leafy greens like broccoli or kale -- which are high in calcium -- will help to reduce the need to hit the company vending machine during the day," Newhouse said.

### **Hungry? Don't eat a chocolate bar...**

Chocolate, like coffee, is almost an addiction. Scarfing down a chocolatey confection when we're stressed is almost an involuntary act, since stress can produce chocolate cravings. Unsurprisingly, chocolate is also known to raise brain serotonin levels which generate feelings of happiness or pleasure. This may be why we can feel 'addicted' to chocolate or sugar.

Another reason we may crave chocolate is due to a magnesium deficiency (chocolate contains high levels of magnesium). Women may also pine for chocolate due to hormonal changes, or, snacking frequently on chocolate could mean the body has a vitamin B shortage.

"It's okay to have a little chocolate to subdue cravings," Newhouse said. "But, you should also supplement with healthier options like mixed nuts, sauté greens like spinach with lemon, olive oil, garlic and rosemary for a sweeter flavor."

### **I'll have fries with that**

We're all guilty of stress-eating and bingeing on certain foods when we're bored or overwhelmed. Newhouse noted during periods of stress our body will naturally crave fast food or fattier foods.

"This could mean you're deficient in essential fatty acids like omega-3s," she said. "Our bodies do not naturally make omega-3s, but you can supplement them or cook with oils like canola oil, extra virgin olive oil or hemp oil to up your intake."

Indulging shamelessly in a large order of fries could also mean our body is actually craving fat, however, not all fats are created equal. The next time you feel the need to order anything fried try supplementing with healthier options like avocados and raw nuts -- which are high in 'good' fats.

### **How to pass on the salt**

If you suddenly develop an intense desire for chips or pretzels, you may be iron-deficient. "When we crave salty things, it's a signal to consume foods with more iron," Newhouse said. "Eating foods high in calcium, potassium and iron can combat these cravings."

Making a salad with dark, leafy greens will all aid in keeping our sodium habit at bay while increasing calcium and iron levels. To up potassium intake, Newhouse recommends snacking on a avocado or citrus fruits.

Important to know: During intense exercise or a difficult workout, your body will actually lose sodium and seek to replace it. "If you're outside working or working out, your body will lose salt through the process of sweating," Newhouse said. "This can increase your cravings for salty foods."

### **Are you just dehydrated?**

Most hunger pangs and cravings usually have a simple solution: Drink more water. "We often misinterpret the signals our body is giving us," Newhouse said. "As a society, we are chronically dehydrated (Just so you know: thirst is actually the last resort signal for dehydration). The next time you reach for something sweet or salty try quelling the craving with a tall glass of water. You may be surprised at the result."

### **A hankering for kale? It's a thing**

Yes, sometimes we do crave fresh food and vegetables like kale or broccoli. Many times this desire for fresh ingredients appears when your body needs more Vitamin C, calcium, iron or magnesium. "If you begin to crave fruits and vegetables, then indulge away!" Newhouse said. "However, if you're trying to limit your carbohydrate intake, you should still pay attention to the amount you eat."

### **It's all about balance**

A healthy diet and lifestyle hinge on one thing: Balance. Newhouse said it's perfectly normal to satisfy cravings in moderation, but, you should also assess your diet during these instances. "Think about the last time you consumed foods in every single color. If you can't remember the last time you ate a tomato or berries, try snacking on those," she advised.