



The Concept of Stress Eating

Dr. Charles Shaffer

I hope everyone had a wonderful and safe Memorial Day weekend but also took time to reflect on what the day is truly about; remembering and honoring those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

I enjoy strolling around and observing what people have placed on their table as well as seeing families interact with one another. If you have not noticed, stress and eating tend to go hand in hand and Americans have had this habit for years. You remember chocolate pie is your favorite dessert so you eat more than one slice.

There is an abundance of evidence supporting the behavior of craving rich foods when stressed.

WHAT YOU'LL FIND
INSIDE:

- **THE CONCEPT OF STRESS EATING**
- **BACTERIA FOR A HEALTHY BODY**
- **THE RECIPE OF THE MONTH**



Stress triggers your brain and body into thinking it needs sugar or other unhealthy foods. If an individual does not curb their cravings and gives in, they can start to gain weight.

It's interesting that we seek out things like ice cream, apple pie, cheesecake, and French fries.

We are attracted to these foods not only because they taste good but because it is the body's attempt to help alleviate the chronic stress you are dealing with.

The brain is not designed to cope with chronic external stress. Here's an example:

You are cut off by a car while driving on Interstate 81. You then swerve and narrowly avoid an automobile accident.

You may feel 'jumpy' or 'jittery' for a bit afterwards. Some individuals describe a pounding in their chest, a tingling feeling all over, or perspiration. When an individual experiences immediate danger their brain instantly signals their body to produce cortisol which is a stress hormone. It relays the message to the body which in turn gives a lifesaving response. Therefore, the heart beat increases as well as alertness. During this response, the blood vessels constrict and divert blood flow from slow process, such as digestion, to fast-acting muscles and responses. The metabolism shifts to high energy which increases muscle speed; this explains why you were able to swerve and control your car.

The University of San Francisco has observed when this system does not 'turn off' it causes the brain to stay in a state of anxiousness or hyper-alertness. Consequences of this can lead to depression.

Long-term anxiety sets off chronic stress and depletes energy. However, foods high in fat and sugar help to restore energy. Dr. Norman Per Caro has noted the escalating levels of cortisol released in chronic stress ushers in excessive calories. The calories are then deposited as fat in your abdomen. Abdominal fat has privileged access to the liver because of its location which allows it to quickly mobilize it for energy. The fat deposits trigger a metabolic signal to the brain essentially telling it to shut off the stress response. Some individuals eat in order to dampen the stress response but gain weight when they submit to their cravings.

Dr. Per Caro also affirmed that "eating seems to enhance some of the symptoms of depression so you won't feel anxious. It seems to be the body's way of telling the brain it is okay".

When taking anti-depressants, there is a potential side effect of obesity. The drug itself may not directly cause obesity, however it raises the question as to what exactly is responsible for the mood improvement.

Dr. Per Caro questions if it is the direction of the serotonin re-uptake inhibitor on the brain or if it could be the indirect action and consequence by the increased feeding inducement by the drug.

The downside of consuming calorie-rich foods is that it is ultimately bad for your health. It may taste or feel good in the moment but it is not suitable for long-term health. Some of the stressors we face are job security, a big test, or anything else causing you to stress or worry. Anything causing an inkling of stress is bound to make you crave rich foods.

There is an effective way to combat stress other than eating junk food. Exercise, meditation, hot baths, and self-care are all ways to combat stress. All of these methods ultimately stimulate the same pleasure centers of the brain that makes us seek out rich foods. These methods mainly pose as short term solutions; the long term solution is to simply not buy unhealthy food.

The next time you have a bad day or things seem like they are going well, do something totally different than eating. You could take a walk, take a relaxing shower, or sit outside and read a book. All of these are better than opening your refrigerator or eating a box of Cheez-It.

As the summer continues on remember to be mindful of the holidays. This is when you will be put to the test. Always ask yourself “is eating _____ really worth it to my long-term goals? Is this supporting the lifestyle I want to live?” Most of the time, the answer is no.

Deuteronomy 31:19 says “I have set before you life and death ... Therefore choose life”. Eating correctly and living a healthy lifestyle is choosing life.

Hold yourself accountable for your actions. Your ability to make wise decisions can come from the silent prayer you utter each time you are tempted to stray to old habits. Choose to live a healthy life.

Blessings,
Chuck Shaffer MD

Bacteria for a Healthy Body

Tricia Foley

Did you know that for every human cell we have, we have 9 bacterial cells? Since birth our bodies have been exposed to trillions of microorganisms. Although this may make you squirm, bacteria are not always a bad thing. Infact, good bacteria can do the following:

- Enhance immunity
- Improve mental health
- Increase nutrient absorption
- Reduce allergy symptoms
- Keep you regular
- Lose and maintain weight loss!

Did that last bullet catch your attention? YES, Recent research supports the notion that the types of bacteria we have can support or hinder our ability to lose weight! The old adage of “calories in/calories out” is not so black and white. As you can see, it’s not always about how many calories we take in, the environment in our gut (among other factors) can make a difference too.

I’m sure by now you are probably wondering how we know if we enough beneficial bacteria? Let’s start how you entered the earth. Believe it or not, whether you were born naturally or through C-section influences your gut microbiome. C-section babies have less exposure to good bacteria compared to those born naturally. Research shows that these individuals may not have as much beneficial bacteria as adults because of this. Another factor that weighs heavily on your gut microbiota is antibiotic therapy. Although antibiotics can be lifesaving by killing off the bad bacteria that cause illness and infection, they also come with a catch. They don’t discriminate, meaning they kill both the bad and the good bacteria. So if you once had a flourishing microbiome filled with tons of strains of helpful bacteria, one round of antibiotics could change this and wipe out colonies of good bacteria after finishing the dose. Unfortunately being sick is another sign of too few good bacteria as well. Research has tied a healthy gut microbiome with strong immunity. If you find that you are under the weather frequently, it may be time to supplement with probiotics.

If you have been lucky enough to stay well and not need antibiotics but you are still suffering from puzzling tummy trouble such as constipation and or diarrhea, bloating and excessive gas, it could be a sign that a probiotic could be right for you. Not only can probiotics help alleviate all these symptoms, they may also help with weight loss!

Having a diverse microbiome is key. Different strains of probiotics do different things. Some help with constipation while others alleviate diarrhea.

They compliment each other and build a strong microbiome. An unhealthy gut is more like a desolate desert, barren void of anything that can grow while a healthy gut is more like a flourishing rainforest with tons of species that help build a strong ecosystem!

When you're looking for a probiotic there are a few key things to keep in mind. Is it diverse, how many strains are in one serving? Aim for at least 5-10 billion (yes BILLION) CFU's. Some strains have been shown to aid in specific ailments. We have provided some of the best below:

Bacillus Coagulans: This strain of bacteria consistently ranks at the top for constipation and healthy digestion. It can also decrease inflammation and minimize symptoms of certain autoimmune disorders.

Saccharomyces Boulardii: In addition to its digestion-boosting benefits, *Saccharomyces boulardii* has powerful antimicrobial effect, which can help block the growth of bacteria and flush out harmful toxins. It also supports immune function, decreasing inflammation.

Bacillus Subtilis: Best probiotic for diarrhea. Some research also supports immune-boosting, antiviral effects as well.

Bacillus clausii: is a strain that benefits digestion and gut health and also contains antimicrobial properties to protect against harmful bacteria, viruses and fungi as well as immune-enhancing effects to fight off infection.

Lactobacillus Gasseri: As one of the best probiotics for weight loss there have been multiple of studies demonstrating just how powerful this strain of bacteria may be when it comes to your waistline. For instance, one study in the British Journal of Nutrition showed that taking *Lactobacillus gasseri* daily led to significant reductions in body weight and body fat compared to a control group, with participants losing up to 8.5 percent body fat over a 12-week period.

Adding a probiotic supplement into your routine can bring some big benefits when it comes to your health. Unfortunately, not all probiotics are created equal. When looking for probiotics, look at the following:

- CFU count: 5-10 billion CFU's minimum.
- Strain diversity: Think Rainforest! Good Probiotics contain a mix of several different probiotic strains.
- Live cultures: Ideally, the best probiotic supplement should be labeled "live and active cultures," instead of "made with active cultures."

The Recipe of the Month

Garlic Butter Steak Bites with Zucchini Noodles Meal Prep

- 3 tbsp butter
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp low sodium soy sauce
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 lb sirloin steak, cut into bite size pieces
- salt, to taste
- 1 tbsp parsley, chopped
- 4 large zucchini, spiralized

Directions

Add butter and garlic in a small saucepan. Cook over low medium heat until butter is melted and garlic starts to brown and they infuse. Stir in the garlic powder and sauce. Adjust and taste as needed then set aside.

Add the oil to a large cast iron skillet and bring to high heat. When oil is hot, add in the steak. Cook for about 1 - 2 minutes on each side, letting them develop a golden sear before flipping. Season with salt as needed.



Let's Get Cooking!



The Recipe of the Month

Garlic Butter Steak Bites with Zucchini Noodles Meal Prep

Directions (cont.)

(Keep in mind that the sauce will add sodium to the steak).

When steak is almost finished cooking, pour two-thirds of the garlic butter sauce over the steak.

Stir steak until cooked and evenly coated. Garnish with parsley.

Remove steak from the pan and divide into meal prep containers.

Using the same pan (and keeping in any remaining sauces from the steak and sauce), add in the zucchini noodles and remaining garlic butter sauce. Stir zucchini noodles until they are fully cooked. Season with salt as needed then drain water and add to meal prep containers.

