

Associations between food intake and perceived stress or depressive symptoms among youth

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Stress is the most common cause of sickness worldwide today among the youth, and the population at large causing unspeakable suffering, use of huge amounts of money in medical bills and loss of numerous working days. Stress refers to non specific response of the body to any demand or strain made upon it. The aim of stress management is to help the individual become more resilient and able to cope rather than to take away the stressful life events. A well balanced diet is crucial in promoting health and stress relief. Vigilance is required when making food choices for stress management which should be as natural as possible, as there is a lot of junk food posing as health food for stress relief in the market.

Food to eat for stress relief:

Carbohydrates:

Carbohydrates in stress management triggers release of the brain neurotransmitter serotonin which has soothing effect. Good sources of carbohydrates include rice, potatoes, green bananas, bread, air-popped popcorn etc. Consumption of meals with different macronutrients, especially high in carbohydrates, may influence stress-related eating behaviour. They aimed to investigate whether consumption of high-protein vs. high-carbohydrate meals influences stress-related mood, food reward, *i.e.* 'liking' and 'wanting', and post-meal energy intake. Consumption of a high-protein vs. high-carbohydrate meal appears to have limited impact on stress-related eating behaviour. Only participants with high disinhibition showed

decreased subsequent 'wanting' and energy intake during rest; this effect disappeared under stress. Acute stress overruled effects of consumption of high-protein foods (Lemmens *et al.*, 2011).

Fresh fruits and vegetables:

Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables in order to improve absorption of the amino acid L-Tryptophan, which causes the body to release serotonin making you feel good and relaxed as a result of stress relief.

Protein:

Include sufficient protein in your daily diet for effective stress management. Consuming adequate protein stabilizes blood sugar and prevents emotional swings and fatigue leading to stress relief. Good protein sources include meat, mushrooms, nuts, hard boiled eggs, Tofu and other soy products, dairy, beans. Lakhan and Viera (2010) did a study on Nutritional and herbal supplements for anxiety and anxiety-related disorders. It was a systematic review. They says that nutritional and herbal supplementation is an effective method for treating anxiety and anxiety-related conditions without the risk of serious side effects. There is the possibility that any positive effects seen could be due to a placebo effect, which may have a significant psychological impact on participants with mental disorders. However, based on this systematic review, strong evidence exists for the use of herbal supplements containing extracts of passionflower or kava and combinations of the amino acids like L-lysine and L-arginine as treatments for anxiety symptoms and disorders. Magnesium-containing supplements and other herbal combinations may hold promise, but more research is

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