HEALTHY LIVING

Stress and Emotional Eating

There is a strong connection between mood, food and healthy eating.

Emotional eating is eating as a way to suppress or soothe negative emotions, such as stress, anger, fear, boredom, sadness and loneliness. Major life events or, more commonly, the hassles of daily life can trigger negative emotions that lead to emotional eating and disrupt your health. These triggers might include:

- Relationship conflicts
- Work stress
- Fatigue
- Financial pressures
- · Health problems

Although some people eat less in the face of strong emotions, if you're in emotional distress you might turn to impulsive or binge eating, quickly consuming whatever is convenient without enjoyment.

In fact, your emotions can become so tied to your eating habits that you automatically reach for a treat whenever you're angry or stressed without thinking about what you're doing.

What should I pay attention to?

- Drinking too much coffee or energy drinks
- Eating the wrong foods: foods that are high in fat and sugar can actually increase stress hormone levels
- Skipping meals: the low blood sugar effect
- Eating a lot of fast food
- Mindless munching

Research has shown that some foods actually induce a state of stress. Excess amounts of sugar, caffeine, salt, bleached flour, and foods poor in vitamins and minerals weaken the body's resistance to the stress response.

Just as exercise and meditation can reduce stress so can certain foods:

- ✓ Warm tea instead of coffee: Chamomile, Mint, Black, Green, Ginger are some examples. Or try warm Apple Cider
- ✓ Dark Chocolate: A healthy comfort food!
- ✓ More Vitamin C: Vitamin C reduces stress. It will also boost your immune system
- ✓ The "Good" carbs: Fresh fruits and vegetables and high fiber, whole grain carbohydrates: A baked sweet potato with honey, brown or wild rice in soups
- ✓ Warm Oatmeal: another healthy comfort food!
- ✓ Healthy MUNCHY and CRUNCHY foods: Popcorn, celery, carrots, apples, nuts

How and when you eat can also reduce stress:

- ✓ Eating smaller, more frequent meals helps your body react to stress better.
 More than 5 hours without food—blood sugar drops and cravings begin
- ✓ Don't skip breakfast. Breakfast will help you stay alert and prevent overeating. Chew gum instead of eating
- ✓ Try to eat at a table and without distractions. Hectic meals can lead to poor digestion, poor food choices and to feeling bad--you need to make time to eat right in order to have energy to do whatever else is important to you
- ✓ Warm milk before bed will help you relax

If you need more information, or would like to talk to someone about resources for health, mental health and/or substance abuse, call GHS' Customer Services at 810-257-3705 toll free 866-211-5455 or TTY 810-257-1346.



Hope and health in the community