



## An Overview on Food Addiction and its Treatment Methods

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### Description

Food addiction is a behavioral disorder characterized by compulsive and excessive consumption of food, typically high in sugar, salt, and fat, leading to obesity and other health complications. It is a type of eating disorder that affects a significant number of people worldwide, and it is often associated with other mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

The concept of food addiction has gained much attention in recent years, as researchers try to understand the underlying causes of obesity and other health problems related to unhealthy eating habits. The term "food addiction" is relatively new, and there is still much debate among scientists and medical professionals regarding its validity as a legitimate diagnosis. However, there is growing evidence that suggests that food addiction shares many similarities with other types of addiction, such as drug and alcohol addiction.

One of the main features of food addiction is an intense craving or urges to eat, even when not hungry. Individuals with this disorder often report feeling powerless over their food intake and describe an inability to control their eating habits. They may also experience withdrawal symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, and depression when trying to cut back on their food intake or when unable to consume certain types of food. Like other addictions, food addiction can be accompanied by feelings of shame, guilt, and low self-esteem.

Another hallmark of food addiction is a preoccupation with food and a persistent desire to seek out and consume high-calorie, high-fat, and high-sugar foods. Individuals with this disorder may spend an

excessive amount of time thinking about food, planning meals, or engaging in binge eating behaviors. This can lead to a loss of interest in other activities and social isolation.

Food addiction has been associated with changes in brain chemistry and structure, similar to those seen in individuals with drug and alcohol addiction. Studies have shown that consuming high-fat and high-sugar foods can trigger the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that is associated with reward and pleasure. Over time, repeated exposure to these foods can lead to a desensitization of the dopamine system, which can cause individuals to seek out even more food to achieve the same level of pleasure. This process is similar to the way that drugs and alcohol can steal the brain's reward system.

Other factors that may contribute to the development of food addiction include genetics, stress, and environmental factors such as food availability and cultural norms. Some studies have found that certain genetic variations may increase an individual's susceptibility to developing food addiction, while others have suggested that stress and trauma can trigger the disorder. Environmental factors such as the availability of cheap, highly processed foods may also play a role in the development of food addiction.

The treatment of food addiction typically involves a combination of behavioral therapies, such as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and mindfulness-based interventions, along with nutritional counseling and support groups. CBT is a type of therapy that helps individuals identify and change negative thought patterns and behaviors that contribute to their food addiction. It is often used to help individuals develop healthier coping strategies and improve their self-esteem and body image.

Mindfulness-based interventions, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), have also been shown to be effective in treating food addiction. MBSR involves training individuals to become more aware of their thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations and to develop more constructive ways of dealing with stress and anxiety.

Nutritional counseling is another important component of food addiction treatment. This involves working with a registered dietitian to develop a healthy and balanced meal plan that meets the individual's nutritional needs while avoiding trigger foods that may contribute to their addiction. Support groups, such as Overeaters Anonymous, can also provide valuable social support and encouragement for individuals in recovery from food addiction.

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