

Understanding Yourself

Cravings For Comfort Foods: The Stress-Fat Connection

by Dr. James B. LaValle

(NAPSA)—People who believe they have a fat chance of losing weight may want to look at the diet process from a new perspective. Rather than focusing solely on calories, carbohydrates or fat, people should pay attention to what drives their desire for certain foods—and a chief culprit is stress.

When chronic stress occurs, the adrenal glands release the hormone cortisol in large amounts. Cortisol is a potent signal to the brain to increase our appetites and cravings for pleasurable foods, or “comfort foods” such as sugar, fat and alcohol.

In addition, cortisol affects body chemistry, making it harder to lose weight—no matter how much (or how little) we eat. For example, cortisol interferes with serotonin, one of our brain’s mood chemicals, leading to a depressed feeling and a drive for more comfort foods.

As a result, we take in more calories and burn off less—so we gain weight—and we tend to gain it specifically around our bellies (which increases our risk for hypertension, diabetes and heart disease).

So What Can You Do?

To decrease stress and stress-related weight gain, first you need to learn to manage your stress levels. Exercise, use meditation or have a quiet place to retreat to



New supplements help cut cravings for sweets.

when you’re stressed out. Eat a diet that’s low in refined sugars or foods that have a low glycemic index to help decrease the stress of blood sugar fluctuation. Eat meals at regular times each day (it’s best not to eat after 7 p.m.). Drink plenty of quality water during the day to minimize the fatigue commonly seen around midday and early afternoon.

Dietary supplements may also help decrease stress and keep the excess weight off. A new supplement called Relora® is an all-natural patented formula of two plant extracts. In multiple human studies, Relora has been shown to decrease stress, anxiety, and cut cravings for comfort foods by normalizing cortisol levels. For more information, visit www.relora.com.

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