

# Are Your Eating Habits Causing *MORE* Stress?

**Identi-T™**  
Personalized Stress  
Relief Program

## Do you...

- Overeat or mindlessly munch?
- Eat late at night?
- Eat when you're not even hungry?
- Eat when you're nervous, sad, or mad?
- Get "orally fidgety" and need a food pacifier?
- Live on fast foods due to lack of time?
- Crave sweets?
- Eat too much fat and salt?
- Skip meals or forget to eat?
- Delay eating until you're starving?

Stress and a hectic lifestyle can affect your eating patterns and food choices. The stress hormone cortisol depletes your blood sugar and makes you hungry. All of which can make you crave "bad" carbohydrates that give you an energy rush followed by a crash...leaving you "hungry" for more "bad" foods (like sweets and fatty/salty food). It's a vicious cycle fueled by stress.

The results? Stress-related weight gain (especially belly fat). Poor sleep quality. Slow healing. Not to mention increased risk to chronic health conditions like metabolic syndrome, heart disease, and diabetes.

*Try these eating suggestions to help break the stress cycle.*

1. **Eat a Protein-Rich Breakfast Every Morning.** Your brain and body run on fuel in the form of protein, fats, and complex sugars called carbohydrates. The brain's energy comes primarily from sugar, and skipping breakfast causes an "alarm" that releases stress hormones. This in turn releases your body's stored sugar in the liver and muscles to feed your "starving" brain—and makes you crave sugary foods and feed the stress cycle.

Your first meal of the day really is important—so eat well. Protein also helps you curb hunger longer, and won't give you the "crash" that sugary foods like sweetened cereal or donuts do. Your healthcare provider may recommend a low-glycemic nutritional beverage or bar to help you get a great start on your day.

2. **Eat Low-Glycemic, Whole Foods.** The glycemic index (GI) measures the rise in blood sugar after consuming a food—a higher GI food causes a greater spike in blood sugar that can feed the stress cycle. The glycemic load (GL) also considers the amount consumed in the carbohydrate, and is considered a better guideline for choosing foods that have less impact on blood sugar levels (higher fiber=lower GL and a lower rise in blood sugar).

As a general rule, stick with whole foods (nuts, whole grains, raw fruits, and vegetables) that are minimally processed—most of which have a lower GL and are also higher in nutritional value.

Avoid foods that are packaged, high in sugar, and/or fried. There are many reliable sources on the Internet that list the GI/GL of foods to help you redefine your eating habits. A low-GL diet has also been recommended to help prevent chronic conditions.

3. **Eat Small, Frequent Meals.** Keep your brain happy by eating 3 meals and 2 snacks daily. Eating every 3-4 hours also helps maintain blood sugar levels. Blood sugar drops when you're hungry, which can signal unhealthy cravings or cause you to overeat. Plus, smaller portions mean fewer excess calories at meals that can potentially be stored as fat. Eating low-GL foods in small portions throughout the day also helps those with "oral fidgets" who need something in their mouth to stay pacified. Plus it prevents late night snacking.
4. **Don't Feed Emotions with Junk Food.** Ask yourself if you're really hungry when you're reaching for food. Eating to feed emotional hunger rather than your physical needs can wreak havoc on an otherwise healthy diet. Emotional eaters may eat when bored (for entertainment), when upset or stressed (instead of facing difficult emotions), or when generally dissatisfied with life (to fill a void).

All these extra calories add up, especially with unhealthy food choices. Take a few minutes to explore the feelings behind the pangs. Journaling may help. Once you address the underlying issues, food won't have the same pull on you.

5. **Find New "Comfort" Foods.** Your favorite indulgence foods—or the ones you crave in times of stress—may be the worst for you (high in saturated fat/salt/sugar). If this sounds familiar, try to substitute your usual comfort foods with low-GL foods you like to eat (and keep them on hand). If you suddenly really crave a soda, go with a bubbly mineral water—plain or sweetened with a small amount of fruit juice. If you crave cookies, consider eating a piece of fruit with a nut butter spread.

## REDUCING STRESS CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS CHANGING YOUR EATING HABITS

Chew on this—you're not only what you eat but also how you eat it. And both may be adding unnecessary stress to your life—or keeping you stressed. These suggestions not only help you manage stress better, but also reduce your risk to chronic diseases.

***For more help with feeling less stressed, ask your healthcare provider for a list of tips to quickly relax in times of stress.***