

## What is Stress Eating and How to Combat It

Many of us are stress-eaters. We break out that big bag of potato chips after a hard day at work or turn to a jumbo bag of M&Ms when the going gets rough. Let's face it. It happens to the best of us. But a new study soon to be released reveals if you already have healthy eating habits in place, you're more likely to stick to them, even during times of stress.

### The Study

The study followed MBA students in the weeks leading up to and during their final exams when they are focusing on studying rather than good eating habits. What researchers found is the students were more likely to stick to their pre-exam eating habits rather than venturing out of their norm. Why is this?

### Stress Eating Research Results

Research shows that everyone has limits to their self-control. Outside influences such as stressful situations can exceed these limits. However, when feeling stressed, it's much easier to fall back on what you know rather than expel the energy to try something new. So, if you have good eating habits already in place, it's much easier to stick to these in times of stress.

### Existing Healthy Eating Habits = Good News

The good news is, a tough day at work or dealing with that annoying person won't send you running for a candy bar or potato chips if you already enjoy eating healthy foods. The bad news is, if you don't already have healthy eating habits in place, stressful situations can have a negative impact on your health and your weight if you turn to eating as a consolation.

### Change Those Bad Eating Habits

So, what do you do if you don't have healthy eating habits? Pick one behavior at a time to change. The ideal time to do this is when you're not feeling stressed and can focus on correcting the bad behavior. Link the desired behavior to something you already do to make an

easier adjustment. Most important, don't beat yourself up if at first you don't succeed in changing your negative behavior. If you fall off the wagon, chalk it up to experience, and move on. Changing habits takes time.

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