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## Stress And Food - Tips For Curbing Cravings

(ARA) - Everyone reaches for comfort foods and junk food when stressed out. You know you shouldn't, but you probably feel you need something to help you during that intense period of time when stress is king.

"In moments of stress, people tend to reach for foods they know, sometimes even favorite foods from childhood. It is certainly not a time when we choose to experiment," says Chef Odette Smith-Ransom, chef instructor at The International Culinary School at The Art Institute of Pittsburgh.

If traveling, you may often search for a familiar restaurant or fast food place. It's easier to reach for food that you know provides a level of comfort to balance out the uncomfortable moments of stress, Smith-Ransom says.

It all comes down to food choices where stress and food are concerned. When stressed, you are more likely to make a quick, bad choice. "The vicious cycle of guilt regarding our eating habits steps in and worsens the current stress situation," Smith-Ransom says. "Add guilt to the situation, and the stress levels increase - compounding the problem."

Chef Smith-Ransom warns that when stressed, one should stay away from caffeine and sugar. It's easy to grab an energy drink or a candy bar because they're accessible and in every convenience and drug store in America.

Once the rush is gone from sugary, caffeine-packed foods, you're facing a crash unless you continue to eat and drink to keep your body in the high. Continuing to eat and drink these products will compound the situation even more because you then become sleep-deprived, which raises the levels of anxiety and slows you down.

The best way to attack bad eating choices during a moment of stress is to maintain your body and mind at equilibrium. Before an important interview, presentation or exam, try eating whole foods and complete meals, and forget about the bag of cookies. While these satiate the appetite at the moment, it certainly won't keep your blood-sugar levels stable, making it difficult to cope with your initial problem: high stress.

"Eat dark, leafy greens, high fiber foods and lean cuts of protein as a complete meal," says nutritionist and public health expert, Nicole Dowsett, a nutrition instructor at The International Culinary School at The Art Institute of Charlotte. She recommends staying away from heavily seasoned foods and eating four to six small meals a day. "Take time to eat and avoid grabbing something on the go to just stuff your face."

It takes 20 minutes for your stomach to communicate with your mind that you are full. Making time to eat is very important. If you can, share meals with friends or loved ones, Dowsett says. Sharing meals helps you to take your time and deters you from making bad choices, or even worse yet, hiding your unhealthy food choices - which can lead to an eating disorder.

"High stress mixed with bad food choices can cause and increase behavioral issues, sleep deprivation, problems focusing, over-thinking tasks without developing a clear focus, inability to prioritize, reduced cognitive skills, heightened sensitivity and heightened emotions," Dowsett says.

By making informed, careful food choices during times of stress, you can help ensure what you eat doesn't add extra calories, fat and poor nutrition to your worries.

## Blurry Vision? It Could Be Retinal Detachment

There are a number of eye conditions that can affect vision. Many people have not heard about retinal detachment, nor know what it entails.

### What is Retinal Detachment?

Retinal detachment is when the light-sensitive part of the eye - the retina - separates from its supporting layers in the eye.

### Purpose of the Retina

The retina receives images seen through the eye and transmits them through the optic nerve to the brain. The image the retina receives is in reverse, and the brain corrects it to right-side up. Essentially the retina processes light and imagery the way film in a camera would.

### Symptoms of Retinal Detachment

Retinal detachment often occurs without any underlying cause, though it can be attributed to eye trauma or a disease like diabetes. When retinal detachment occurs, there would be a tear or hole in the retina into which eye fluids leak. This causes the separation of the transparent tissues of the retina from other tissues.

Minor retinal detachment may cause no symptoms. If the macula, the part of the retina responsible for fine vision,



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Eye troubles can be a side effect of retinal detachment, a condition where the light-sensitive cells in the back of the eye separate from other layers.

becomes compromised, then central vision can be severely affected. Other symptoms of retinal detachment include:

- blurred vision
- floaters in the eye
- shadow or blindness in one part of the visual field
- bright flashes of light in peripheral vision

An optometrist or ophthalmologist will do a series of vision

tests during a routine exam. If retinal detachment is suspected, further tests may be conducted. These tests can include:

- Electroretinogram: A record of the electrical currents in the retina.
- Intraocular pressure test: Measures the pressure inside of the eye. This test is usually performed to check for glaucoma.

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## Melanoma — The Most Serious Skin Cancer

Though certainly not the most common form of skin cancer, melanoma is the most serious type of skin cancer. According to the American Melanoma Foundation, the incidence of melanoma has been steadily increasing for the last three decades.

The most common form of cancer for young adults 25 to 29 years old, melanoma can affect just the skin or spread to other parts of the body, including organs and bones. Because the incidence of melanoma is on the rise, it helps men and women, and even children and teens, to learn about melanoma in the hopes of preventing the onset of this potentially fatal form of skin cancer.

### What causes melanoma?

Normal skin cells become abnormal when people spend too much time in the sun. Once skin cells become abnormal, they can quickly grow out of control and attack the tissue around them. People who live in regions where sunlight is more intense, such as the southern United States, are more likely to develop melanoma than those who live in regions where sunlight is not as intense. In addition, parents should be especially mindful of their child's sun exposure. As the AMF notes, melanoma has been linked to excessive sun exposure in the first 10 to 18 years of life.

### Does melanoma run in families?

Melanoma does tend to run in families, and people with abnormal moles might have a family history of melanoma. While these atypical moles, which can be smooth or appear rough, don't cause cancer by them-

selves, having them could indicate a family history of melanoma. People with such moles should be especially protective of their skin when spending time in the sun.

### What are the symptoms of melanoma?

Melanoma often manifests itself in changes in a mole or other growth on the skin. When a mole changes in shape, size or color it could be a sign of melanoma. Typically, however, melanoma grows in unmarked skin and can be found anywhere on the body. Where melanoma forms often depends on gender. In men, melanoma is most likely to develop on the upper back. For women, melanomas often develop on the legs.

A flat, brown or black mole with uneven edges, melanoma usually has an irregular shape, with one half not matching the other. Melanomas can change color, ooze or bleed, become crusty, and appear lumpy or rounded.

### Is melanoma preventable?

Melanoma might not be entirely preventable, but men, women and children can take steps to reduce their risk significantly. Melanoma has been found on parts of the body that have never been exposed to the sun, but the best way to protect against melanoma is to be careful when out in the sun. Avoiding exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays is the most effective preventive step, and people can do that in a number of ways.

- Stay out of the sun in peak UV hours. UV rays are at their strongest and most harmful between the hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Stay out of the sun during these hours

as much as possible.

- Avoid tanning salons. Researchers do feel there is a link between the growing popularity of tanning salons and the rise in melanoma cases. The AMF notes that the rate of melanoma incidence in young white women, who are among the most frequent tanning salon customers, is rising rapidly.

- Wear protective clothes when in the sun. Long-sleeved shirts, protective hats that shade the face and long pants are some of the clothing options that can reduce risk of melanoma.

- Wear sunscreen every day. Sunscreen should have a sun protection factor, or SPF, of at least 15. Apply sunscreen every day, and look for products that protect against both UVA and UVB rays.

### What if I am diagnosed with melanoma?

Melanoma diagnosis is not a death sentence. In fact, melanoma is staged on a scale of 1 to 4. A stage 1 melanoma is less severe, while a stage 4 indicates the cancer has spread to other parts of the body. According to the American Cancer Society, when melanoma is detected and treated before it spreads to the lymph nodes, the five-year survival rate is 99 percent. A person's chance of surviving a melanoma diagnosis greatly increases the earlier it is detected, so men and women who spend ample time in the sun should routinely inspect their skin for any abnormal moles. Parents, too, should make it a point to inspect their children's skin after exposure to the sun.

To learn more about melanoma, visit the American Melanoma Foundation at [www.melanomafoundation.org](http://www.melanomafoundation.org).

## Foods That Improve Your Looks

If we are what we eat, then it may be a good idea to take inventory of the foods the average person consumes on a daily basis. Although some foods are sought after for their taste, there are many foods that can be enjoyed because they have a positive effect on a person's appearance.

In the simplest sense, eating a healthy diet can help maintain a good body weight, which is one way to improve individual appearance. But more specifically, there are certain foods that have particular benefits for the skin, hair and body. The key is knowing what to eat.

**Soy:** Soy is rich in amino acids. This food, whether eaten as a soy bean or in the many foods made from soy, including tofu, can help the skin retain moisture and improve elasticity. Soy is also protein-rich, which can help a person feel full longer and avoid overeating.

**Blueberries and cherries:** These fruits are chock full of antioxidants, which studies show can reduce inflammation, a culprit of puffy, aging skin. Cherries are also a natural source of melatonin, which can help a person get a restful night's sleep - another component of looking your best.

**Fresh herbs:** Seasoning food with flavorful herbs instead of salt is another way to improve looks. Salt is often a culprit in

water retention, which can lead to bloating and puffiness. This is also advantageous to people who need to reduce salt intake thanks to high blood pressure or other ailments.

**Lime, pear, apple, and strawberry:** These power fruits are high in vitamin C and other nutrients, making them an important component of a healthy diet. Furthermore, some research has suggested that certain foods, including limes, pears and apples, can whiten teeth.

**Egg products:** Eggs are high in vitamin A, which helps repair skin. Not getting enough vitamin A may contribute to wrinkles.

**Milk products:** Consuming low- or nonfat dairy products helps promote strong bones and teeth. Nothing says beautiful more than a big, bright smile. B vitamins in dairy also help with red blood cell growth, cells that are responsible for bringing oxygen to other cells. This can promote healthy, young-looking skin.

**Yogurt:** Yogurt contains beneficial bacteria, which help with digestion. This can help cleanse out the system and prevent toxins from backing up in the body.

**Water:** Of course a person needs to stay hydrated, and water can flush the body of excess salt and toxins while also plumping the skin.

There are many nutritionally sound foods that can boost outward appearance as well.



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