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Food addiction and eating disorders

Rebecca Cooper
Rebecca's House Eating Disorder Foundation, USA

Abstract

There is much controversy about eating disorders having an addictive quality. Millions of people are becoming obese or engaging in disordered eating that resembles addiction. This could be why some patients are unable to control their intake of certain foods. It could also explain why eating disorders are often a precursor to substance abuse and why many people use food instead of their drug of choice in early alcohol and substance abuse recovery.

Recent reports suggest that excessive overconsumption of certain foods or drugs of abuse causes similar neuroadaptive responses in brain reward circuitries.Not every patient with an eating disorder has a food addiction. But for those who have developed food sensitivitiesdue to bingeing will not recover until the food addiction is addressed. The Yale Food Addiction Scale and the Sugar Awareness Scale have been designed to identify signs and symptoms consistent with food addiction.

Functional MRI studies in humans show that food and drug cues of those addicted activate the same regions of the brain. Even external cues–including previous associations, advertisements, sights, and smells, can trigger food cravings, overeating, and an increased preference for highly palatable foods for those with a food addiction.

What if people are unknowingly eating foods that have addicting substances that causes mood swings, food cravings, eating disorders and binge eating? The session highlights important research and imaging evidence that demonstrate that highly palatable foods may be addictive to some people, and that dopamine signaling may be dysregulated in obesity.

Biography

Rebecca Cooper is a licensed therapist, licensed professional certified counselor, Certified Eating Disorder Specialist (CEDS) and International Association of Eating Disorder Professions (iaedp) Supervisor Chair. She is the Founder of Rebecca's House Eating Disorder Foundation, a 501c3 Nonprofit Organization. She is the author of Diets Don't Work® and many published articles about eating disorders and addiction. She is an international speaker and appears on television, webcasts, professional conferences and radio to promote eating disorder awareness.

rebeccaburgecooper@gmail.com