

CORRESPONDENCE

Eating Habits during COVID-19 Quarantine

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 outbreak has affected billions of people worldwide. We are facing a critical situation with various challenges. Many countries have imposed restrictions on daily life activities to control the spread of virus. This has caused changes in working patterns and living conditions like staying indoors for prolonged periods.¹ This stressful conditions is affecting directly our eating habits. Prolonged stress triggers the release of cortisol that produce hunger sensation.² In some people it also leads to binge eating disorder (BED). In BED there is regular and frequent intake of large quantities of food and lack of control over eating. Studies indicate that stress induces changes in our food preferences from low fat diet to high fat diet.³ Thus stress causes unhealthy food addiction that leads to obesity. Obesity boost the production of adipokines and other cytokines that eventually cause low grade inflammation, and affect the development of other metabolic conditions like diabetes and arterial hypertension.⁴

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Results of different studies have shown high intake of food during quarantine. A study conducted in Poland, to evaluate nutritional habits in adult during quarantine, reported increase in appetite among half of the participants while 43% stated weight gain. Weight loss was observed only in 18% of individuals. This was associated with high intake of fast-food, dairy and meat and, relatively less consumption of fruits, vegetables, and legumes during quarantine. The weight gain tendency was observed in older, overweight and obese subjects while underweight subjects showed a tendency towards weight loss.¹ The study exposed the vulnerability of obese and overweight people during quarantine, Staying healthy during this period of confinement is challenging. Healthy eating habits during this time is important to enhance our immune system as virus is continuously spreading. It is important to remain physical active to control weight and eat balanced diet containing all essential nutrients. It is recommended to avoid high glycemic index carbohydrates like sweets, sugar or bread.

Instead low glycemic index carbohydrates like brown rice, whole grain, legumes, vegetables and fruits should be used. Proteins are an important part of diet, so food rich in protein but with low percentage of fat should be included in diet.⁵ A balanced diet also helps in normal functioning of immune system.

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