

FAST FOOD | April 2, 2012 | 2 COMMENTS

Fast food eaters are more depressed



Eating fast food frequently has been linked to an increased risk of depression. Photo credit: Jess Sawrey

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The documentary *Super Size Me* revealed the profound impact and dire consequences of frequent fast food consumption on your physical health. Now research published in the March 2012 edition of the *Public Health Nutrition* journal suggests it also harms your mental health.

Fast food is engrained into American culture and rapidly expanding worldwide. Parents everywhere can attest that their non-reading children know to plead for a Happy Meal when they see the golden arches of McDonald's. And their incessant pleading for that fast food often works according to Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food Nation*. He claims that 90 percent of children aged three to nine visits a McDonald's every month.

There is no doubt that food and emotions are connected. The amount of food people eat can vary depending on their mood. The truth is some foods contain chemicals that modify your mood by triggering the production of hormones.

As part of the current study, University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and University of Granada researchers evaluated the diets and mental health of more than 8,900 study participants. Participants were categorized as being depressed if they had been diagnosed with depression by a physician or prescribed antidepressants during the follow up questionnaires.

Remarkably, scientists established that the frequent consumption of fast foods – hamburgers, pizza and hot dogs – and commercial baked goods like muffins, doughnuts and cakes, more than doubled the possibility of developing depression when compared to those who only ate these foods occasionally or not at all.

Interestingly, many of these same foods that trigger depression are also high in trans fats that have been associated with [irritability and aggression \(healthy-living-in-national/irritable-and-aggressive-blame-trans-fats\)](#).

Lead author of the study Almudena Sanchez-Villegas explained that "the more fast food you consume, the greater your risk of depression," according to [materials](#)

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The study authors also noted that participants who consumed the most fast food and baked goods were more likely to be less active and eat an unhealthy diet with few servings of fruits, nuts, vegetables, and fish. A healthy diet and regular physical activity are both inversely associated with depression.



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Scott Johnson is a professional health and fitness writer and author of “Nutrition: A Word of Wisdom.” He has produced more than 200 articles featured in various online and print publications. He holds a Doctor of Naturopathy degree and is a Certified Professional Coach. He specializes in health,...