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Does Eating Fast Food Lead To Depression?

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Those who are regular consumers of fast food products are over 50% more likely to be depressed than those who abstain from burgers, fries, pizza and other related foods, according to a study by the [Palmas de Gran Canaria \(ULPGC\)](#) and the [University of Granada](#) published in the journal [Public Health Nutrition](#).

Furthermore, according to lead author Almudena Sánchez-Villegas, the study, published in the journal [Public Health Nutrition](#), also demonstrated a dose-response relationship: the more fast food or commercial baked foods (doughnuts, croissants, etc.) a person eats, the higher the risk that they will become depressed as a result.

The research also discovered that subjects who ate the highest quantities of these types of foods have poor overall dietary habits (i.e. eating fewer servings of fruits and vegetables, fish, and nuts) and poor exercise habits, the [Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology \(FECYT\)](#) said in a press release on Friday.

They are also more likely to be single, the researchers discovered, according to FECYT.

As part of their study, Sánchez-Villegas and colleagues followed a sample of nearly 9,000 individuals affiliated with the SUN Project ([University of Navarra](#) Diet and Lifestyle Tracking Program).

None of them had ever been diagnosed or treated for depression before the start of the study, and after an average of six months' worth of assessment, nearly 500 of them had either received such a diagnosis or had started taking antidepressants.

"This new data supports the results of the SUN project in 2011, which were published in the [PLoS One](#) journal," the FECYT media advisory said. "The project recorded 657 new cases of depression out of the 12,059 people analyzed over more than six months. A 42% increase in the risk associated with fast food was found, which is lower than that found in the current study."

While Sánchez-Villegas admits that "more studies are necessary," the researcher adds that "the intake of this type of food should be controlled because of its implications on both health (obesity, cardiovascular diseases) and mental well-being."

However, in an interview with Dr. Alethea Turner of [ABC News](#), [Yale University](#)'s Prevention Research Center Director Dr. David Katz suggested that the study may have the cause-effect relationship reversed.

"Higher intake of fast food may very well increase risks of depression by causing poor health in general. But depression may also increase fast food intake," he said. "We use the term 'comfort food' for a reason. It can help alleviate stress, anxiety, and depression. So it may be that people with depression are turning to [fast food] for relief."

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