

# ARE YOU AN EMOTIONAL EATER?

You could be snacking your way to ill-health, says Zeenia F Baria

**H**ow many times have you reached out for food when you aren't really hungry? Does eating provide you comfort when nothing else seems to? Do you eat when you're bored, angry, happy, distressed? You could be an emotional eater. Clinical nutritionist Dr Nupur Krishnan says that an eating disorder depends on the person's psychological sense of control and is related to metabolic control. "This is especially true in young women, for whom there is the added psychological pressure for being thin. Emotional eat-

ple chronic and nutritional deficiency related diseases. Excess sugar and concentrated starches cause havoc in the hormones of metabolism and lead blood sugar levels to fluctuate.

### Are women more prone?

Experts agree that women are more likely to indulge in emotional eating than men. Clinical psychologist Seema Hingorrany says that women with eating issues often connect the food they eat directly to their body image. "They create an equation

between their 'ugly' body part and food. Sadly, such women think they can stop eating any time to improve the way they look. There is a strong association between food and emotion in many women, which poses a challenge to healthy eating. Emotional eating is a serious women's health issue, and shouldn't be ignored. If not addressed, it can spin out of control and lead to grave medical and psychological

conditions, such as anorexia, depression, anxiety and even cardiovascular disease and obesity," says Seema.

### Symptoms

Common emotions, which trigger binge eating include anxiety, guilt,

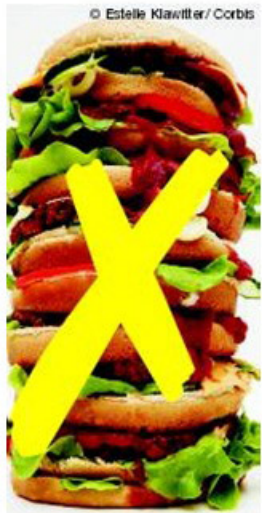
hatred and often depression. The sole purpose of the food is to make one feel good. Never mind that after the effects wear out, eating has to be resorted to yet again! Eating when you're not hungry, when you're upset, when you have poor interpersonal connections with your partner are all common symptoms. Unfortunately, it is a vicious loop. One eats because they're upset and hate themselves for eating just like that.

### Overcoming this problem

Clinical psychologist and psychotherapist Varkha Chulani says that emotional eating cannot be treated by a nutritionist. "This isn't about being able to eat right, in small quantities, at regulated intervals. It is about why you are determined to harm yourself. The answer then is not exercise or diet, it is emotional management. The sensible approach to this

problem is to treat attitudes responsible for the persons inability to cope. Food has unfortunately become a coping mechanism. Training in sensible ideating, re-thinking poor philosophies, questioning age-old ideas, is the way to go. A person is better off seeing a therapist instead of running to a dietitian or a physical trainer, because a healthy mind will lead to a healthy body," ends Chulani.

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**WATCH OUT:** Emotional eaters are driven to eat large volumes of high calorie foods in a short period of time



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- Don't use food as an emotional stress reliever
- Eat on a preset schedule, dividing your intake throughout the day. Don't skip meals
- A nutritious diet rich in green leafy vegetables, fruits, rice and oats is a must. Your diet should contain no refined sugar, corn syrup, honey or other concentrated simple sugar sources or foods made from them. Limit potatoes, wheat, corn, breads, rolls, pasta because of their unfavourable effect on blood sugar levels
- Divide your day's calories in to five to six parts and try to schedule one fourth of the total about every four to five hours while you are awake
- Never go for long periods without eating. Plan what you will eat, when and where to eat
- Zinc is often deficient in people who binge. Including zinc in your diet is especially important to battle this disorder because it increases appetite

ing or binging is one of the three major eating disorders, the other two being anorexia and bulimia. People suffering from binge eating disorders are driven to eat large volumes of high calorie foods in a short period of time (sometimes 8-10,000 calories)," says Dr Krishnan.

### Effects

It often results in obesity, which could lead to physical and psychological stress. More often than not, emotional binging is associated with non-nutritional foods and likely to result in multi-