

Can stress fuel obesity in you? Expert clears air

HT Cafe · 19 Jan 2023 · 4 · Arushi Bidhuri

While managing the hustle and bustle of life, people often get stressed to a point which affects their mental and physical health. Do you know that too much stress can lead to obesity? Stress and obesity are highly prevalent problems that affect millions of people across the world. These problems have a strong association with each other.



It is often said that too much stress can take a toll on your health. It can also contribute to the sudden weight gain that may be noticed around the belly. Dr Shobha Subramanian-Itolikar, consultant, Internal Medicine at a hospital in Mumbai, helps understand more about the inherent link between weight gain and stress.

THE LINK BETWEEN STRESS AND OBESITY

Stress is a prevalent problem in today's world, with several people succumbing to it on a daily basis. It wouldn't be a problem if it didn't lead to health problems, which brings us to the topic of discussion, obesity.

Dr Itolikar explains, "In today's fast-paced and competitive world, stress is faced by all age groups, be it peer pressure among children, economic and societal pressure among middle-aged persons or health issues faced by the elderly. Obesity further adds to the stress by virtue of being a social stigma. Hence, we need to understand how to combat this problem and keep the deadly duo at bay."

HOW DOES STRESS LEAD TO OBESITY?

Not one, but stress can lead to obesity in several ways. The expert shares three ways in which stress affects the body.

IMPAIRED BEHAVIOURAL RESPONSE

Stress affects our cognitive (processing) ability and selfregulatory behaviour. This forms the basis of stress eating, binge eating, and other factors that lead to obesity, says Dr Itolikar.

STRESS HORMONE

The fight-or-flight hormone cortisol creates problems in our body by opposing the action of the body's glucoselowering hormone known as insulin. This leads to high blood sugar levels, low cellular glucose levels and increased appetite, all of which contribute to obesity.

FAT DEPOSITION

Cortisol mobilises fats from storage sites and relocates them around organs and visceral sites like the abdomen and thighs leading to obesity, explains the expert.

HOW TO AVOID STRESS AND REDUCE THE CHANCES OF OBESITY

Here is what the expert suggests you can do to make sure that stress isn't leading to problems you don't want in your life:

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Ensure good and adequate sleep.

Deep breathing exercises, yoga and meditation.

Opt for cardio and resistance training.

Wherever appropriate, seek expert advice in the form of psychological counselling.

Develop a hobby like singing, music, gardening or painting, and nurture it.

DIETARY CHANGES

Follow low carbohydrate and low-fat diet. Avoid trans fats and saturated fats. Consume a fibre-rich diet that gives you antioxidants and phytonutrients. Ensure adequate hydration because thirst is often confused with hunger.

BEHAVIOURAL MODIFICATION, ESPECIALLY WHILE EATING

Watch your speed of eating. Control the portion or amount of meals.

Load your plate with fibres and proteins. Develop coping mechanisms when stressed to avoid over-eating or binge-eating. Do not give in to sugar cravings. Stress-eaters should consume small, frequent healthy meals and snacks. These simple tips will ensure you have a healthy body and a healthy mind.

For more such stories follow healthshots.com*