

SUGAR CRAVINGS LINKED TO LONELINESS: STUDY

Times of Oman · 22 Apr 2024 · B5 · -ONA

A recent study published in JAMA Network Open sheds light on the link between loneliness and unhealthy eating habits. Researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles, led by Dr. Arpana Gupta, found that social isolation can trigger a craving for sugary foods, leading to weight gain and other health issues.

The researchers explored how brain chemistry is altered and how it processes food cues based on social settings in 93 participants.

Their findings revealed those who experienced loneliness or isolation had a higher percentage of body fat and displayed poor eating behaviors, such as food addiction and uncontrolled eating.

Scientists used MRI scans to monitor how the participants responded to abstract images of sweet and savory foods.

The results showed those who experienced isolation had the most activity in certain regions of the brain that play a key role in responding to sugar cravings.

Those same participants showed a lower reaction in regions that deal with self-control.

Dr. Gupta emphasizes the importance of social connections in regulating unhealthy eating behaviors.

For those struggling with social anxiety or self-isolation, experts recommend techniques such as journaling, identifying triggers, and practicing mindfulness to alleviate stress and build confidence.