

Certain foods can affect stress levels

By Allison Aubrey, NPR

Eat more when you're stressed? You're not alone. More than a third of the participants in a national survey conducted by NPR, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health said they change their diets during stressful times.

And many of us are quick to turn to either sugary foods or highly refined carbohydrates such as bagels or white pasta when the stress hits.

"There can be a bit of a vicious cycle," says David Ludwig, a professor of pediatrics and nutrition at Harvard University and a researcher at Boston Children's Hospital. "When we feel stressed we seek foods that are going to comfort us immediately, but often times those foods lead to surges and crashes in hormones and blood sugar that increase our susceptibility to new stresses."

Now, of course, we can't control lots of the events and circumstances that lead to stress. But, Ludwig says, "our body chemistry can very much affect how that stress gets to us."

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