

# Why binge eating foods high in sugar, fat, can make you feel depressed



While practicing physical distancing due to COVID-19, many of us find ourselves stuck at home, stressed out by financial worries or concerns about the virus itself.

In addition, we may simply be feeling bored or frustrated by the disruption in our normal routine. When under stress, some people may binge eat foods that are tasty but full of fats and sugar as a way of coping with those feelings.

While this may make you feel better for a while, experts say it can ultimately set you up for a cycle of depression and even more binge eating. However, understanding why we binge eat in response to stress can help us make better choices and avoid the mood changes associated with it.

How does stress lead to binge eating? According to Jennifer Lentzke, MS, CEDRD, a registered dietitian and triathlete, stress raises the levels of a hormone in our body called cortisol. Cortisol sets off a cascade of events that changes the chemistry of our brain, especially in relation to those

chemicals that regulate mood, appetite, motivation, and sleep. In order to offset this imbalance in hormones, our body causes us to crave high-carbohydrate or highly palatable foods in order to increase these important chemicals. These foods often contain some combination of fat and sugar, or fat and salt, Lentzke explained, which trigger the pleasure centers of the brain, making us feel more calm, content, or even somewhat euphoric.

In the short term, this is helpful because it helps raise the level of “feel good” neurotransmitters like serotonin, which help us feel more calm and relaxed.

In the long run, however, it can lead to many problems, including weight gain, poor blood sugar control, and problems with sleep, behavior, and mood.

In difficult times, you need to be able to turn to experts who understand and can help strengthen your mental well-being. We're here for you.

How does binge eating contribute to depression? According to Dr. Michelle Pearlman, a gastroenterologist and expert in

obesity medicine at the University of Miami Health System, eating highly-refined foods that are rich in sugar causes rapid changes in blood sugar, insulin, and other hormones that regulate mood and satiety.

These fluctuations affect cortisol, as well as stress-related catecholamines like epinephrine, she said, which can lead to further binge eating. Although binge eating can make a person feel better for a while, its effects are only temporary. This can stimulate cravings for more sugar and fat, she said, leading to even more binge eating.

“People often feel guilt after they indulge and this can further worsen one’s underlying depression and other mood disorders,” added Pearlman.

The binge eating/depression cycle Lentzke noted that binge eating can “set off a cascade of addictive patterns” that only make the original problem worse.

People continue to use the maladaptive coping mechanism of binge eating rather than dealing with their underlying issues. —Health Line

## Plasma therapy trial for COVID-19 begins at Karachi’s AKU

**KARACHI:** A new clinical trial evaluating the benefits and safety of plasma therapy, an emerging form of treatment, in COVID-19 patients is underway at the Aga Khan University in Karachi. Convalescent plasma therapy involves separating blood donated by previous COVID-19 patients into plasma, a clear straw-colored liquid, that contains antibodies and proteins that help fight infections.

The plasma is then injected into a severely ill patient whose immune system may not be able to generate the antibodies needed to combat the virus. A single donation can potentially treat two patients. Researchers will perform three pre-procedural investigations on each donor to ensure their blood is safe and to check their suitability for apheresis, the process which collects plasma. Like a typical blood donation, the process is painless after the initial prick and lasts around two hours.

Once plasma is transfused into a patient, the team will monitor the response to the treatment and assess its effectiveness through clinical and laboratory tests. Informed consent will be sought from all potential donors as well as those receiving the treatment, the AKU said in a statement.

“Plasma therapy can potentially help treat patients with moderate to severe COVID-19 infection,” said Dr. Natasha Ali, who is part of a team of six faculty members from the departments of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and Internal Medicine, working on the trial. “This trial is part of the University’s science-based approach to evaluating novel treatments that can help save lives during this pandemic.” There is currently no vaccine for the novel coronavirus and no approved form of treatment beyond managing its symptoms. The trial will generate evidence on whether plasma therapy, the only experimental treatment currently available for the virus, can help treat those suffering from acute complications from the virus. The University is also participating in Solidarity, the international clinical trial launched by the World Health Organisation and its partners, to find effective treatments for the coronavirus. The study has been approved by the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan and Pakistan’s National Bioethics Committee. —APP



## People who test positive for COVID-19 after recovering aren't infectious



Around the world, there have been several cases of people recovering from COVID-19 only to later test positive again and appear to have another infection.

Such cases have had doctors and researchers puzzling over whether recovered people continue to be contagious, and if they could get a second infection.

Now, new research published by the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found that recovered COVID-19 patients who test positive again aren't infectious.

The study also found that most patients who recover have neutralizing antibodies — the type of antibody that confers immunity and protects people from getting sick again. “This study addresses the question of whether patients who have recovered from COVID-19 are still infectious, and

which is a question that has been troubling us for some time,” said Dr. Heidi J. Zapata, a Yale Medicine infectious disease doctor. “This study suggests that patients that are recovered are no longer contagious.”

The viral material in re-positive cases isn't infectious. The Korean study examined 285 patients who tested positive again for the new coronavirus after they recovered from COVID-19, which had been confirmed via a negative test result.

The researchers swabbed the patients and examined the viral material to determine whether it was still actively infectious. The team was unable to isolate live viral material, indicating that the positive diagnostic tests were picking up dead virus particles.

“[This] may speak for the fact that the virus may be dead or not be fit enough to grow — therefore the virus

may not be fit enough to infect a new host,” said Dr. Andres Romero, an infectious disease specialist at Providence Saint John’s Health Center in Santa Monica, California. The researchers also tested 790 people who’d been in close contact with the “re-positive” patients. Of the 27 who tested positive, no cases appeared to be caused from exposure to someone who appeared to have a reinfection.

The report also found that the vast majority of recovered patients (96 percent) had neutralizing antibodies, indicating that they conferred immunity.

“Whether this is indicative of a completely protective response remains to be proven. If this study holds true, then people who have recovered can get back to work,” Zapata said. In response to the new findings, South Korea eliminated a policy requiring discharged patients to isolate for 2

weeks. In difficult times, you need to be able to turn to experts who understand and can help strengthen your mental well-being. We're here for you. Conducting and interpreting PCR tests

The tests widely used to diagnose COVID-19 are called polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests. The tests swab a person’s nose or throat and try to pick up the virus’s genetic material, or RNA.

According to guidance Trusted Source from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a positive result on a PCR test doesn't “necessarily mean infectious virus is present or that the patient is contagious.” Infectious disease experts have suspected that the test kits aren't picking up actively infectious viral material in recovered patients who test positive again, but rather dead rem-

## Is it safe to get your hair cut or your nails done right now?

All data and statistics are based on publicly available data at the time of publication. Some information may be out of date. Visit our coronavirus hub and follow our live updates page for the most recent information on the COVID-19 outbreak.

As businesses across the country begin to reopen, many people will be faced with important decisions. That includes whether or not to venture out. Just how safe is it to enter

should,” she told Healthline. While hair salons and barbershops as well as nail and tanning salons opened earlier this month in Texas with recommended guidelines in place, Troisi isn't booking an appointment just yet. “I have not gotten my hair cut, and believe me it needs it, and my feet could sure use a pedicure, but I just don't think it's worth the risk right now,” she said in mid-May. During that time period, Texas recorded its highest single-day in-

crease in confirmed COVID-19 cases on May 16. Over the Memorial Day weekend, cases and deaths in Texas did dip to their lowest levels in more than a month.

The concerns, however, are still out there when it comes to close contact businesses such as hair and nail salons. They were not eased by a story coming out of Missouri this week. Two stylists at a Great Clips in St. Louis reportedly worked for as many as eight days this month despite having COVID-19 symptoms. Officials estimate the two stylists exposed as many as 140 customers as well as at least seven co-workers to the virus. Guidelines recommended by health departments in each state will significantly alter the hair and nail experience as we know it. Some of the safety protections, such as the new standards in Texas, are the implementation of a 6-foot distance between operating stations, no-contact thermometer checks of patrons as they enter, and contactless payment options for checkout.

Appointments will be scheduled, and walk-in clients will be asked to wait outside. Children will not be able to accompany customers to appointments. In addition, items like magazines will be removed from waiting areas. Employees will wear masks, and in certain states, you may be asked to wear a face covering, too. In Connecticut, where salons are scheduled to reopen in early June, hair services will be restricted to hair and eyebrows, since they do not require the removal of a face mask. It's recommended that the client and employee speak minimally when within a 6-foot distance.

Clariss Rubenstein, a hairstylist in Beverly Hills, California, is planning for her reopening in July. On her lengthy list of changes: Employees at her salon Gloss will be tested for the virus before returning to work. They will wear masks

and gloves at all times. Clients will be distanced 6 feet apart. To accommodate customers, the salon will be open 7 days a week with extended business hours. They're also in the process of creating a private room for clients who request extra precautions.

“We've got clients of all ages. You never know who has an underlying risk,” she said. “We just want them to feel really safe coming in.”



Precaution at salons While salons in New York have yet to open, Dr. Sandra Kesh, an infectious disease specialist and deputy medical director at Westmed Medical Group in Purchase, New York, also won't be scheduling a salon visit soon. She suggests deferring salon visits, especially if you live in an area where COVID-19 cases are still active. If

you choose to go, she recommends you “take every safeguard you can and do it in the safest way possible.”

Kesh said it's important to assess your own comfort level with the risk of contracting COVID-19.

“If you do decide to go, I would recommend you wear a proper face mask and maybe even goggles to reduce the risk of respiratory droplets reaching your eyes,” she told Healthline. She added it's important

experts who understand and can help strengthen your mental well-being. We're here for you.

The risk is there The sheer nature of the employee-to-customer interaction in a salon makes maintaining physical distance impossible.

“When getting a haircut or a mani-pedi, you are definitely not 6 feet apart,” Kesh said. “In fact, you are really within 1 foot of space from each other.” Even with wearing a mask there is still a risk at such a close distance.

“You're in close contact,” said Troisi. “Both of you could be masked, you and the hairdresser or the nail person. That would reduce spread, but you're still not physically distancing, so there is a risk.” “I think you have to decide, is it worth taking the risk for something that isn't necessary?” Troisi added.

It's also important to consider the period of time you will be in such an establishment. “A woman's haircut is typically a 35 to 40 minute appointment at minimum. The longer your exposure time, the more you risk contracting the virus,” Kesh said.

“If you are in a close physical space with other people for a longer period of time, your risk of exposure becomes greater,” explained Kesh. “If you're passing by someone quickly like you might on the sidewalk or a bike path, for instance, the risk of getting coronavirus is smaller than being within 1 or 2 feet of someone washing your hair and giving you a haircut for an hour or more.” —Health Line



a salon for a haircut or manicure right now during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Dr. Catherine Troisi, PhD, an infectious disease epidemiologist at UTHealth School of Public Health in Houston, Texas, has a straight answer. “Just because you can do something doesn't mean you