

## Consequences of Food Addiction

### Consequences may include:

- ❑ Frequently continuing to overeat past the point of feeling comfortably full and often feeling unable to stop eating
- ❑ Feelings of guilt or shame after eating
- ❑ Isolating from others when eating
- ❑ Lying to self or others about eating behaviors
- ❑ Taking food that isn't his/hers
- ❑ Emotional or physical withdrawal symptoms when stopping or reducing specific types of foods
- ❑ Distress or difficulty functioning due to behaviors related to eating

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### Am I ready to make lifestyle changes?

When thinking about your eating habits, ask yourself the following questions:

- ❑ Is changing my eating behaviors **important** to me?
- ❑ Am I **ready** to make changes related to the way I eat?
- ❑ Do I **need help** or support to change my eating behaviors?

## Take Control of Your Eating

### Here are some tips:

- ❑ Seek help. Talk to your doctor or mental health clinician about your concerns and available options
- ❑ Find a support group of peers that will provide encouragement and guidance
- ❑ Make a list of foods you commonly binge on and the frequency of bingeing
- ❑ Keep a journal to know what feelings or circumstances act as triggers that make you want to reach for food
- ❑ Make a list of healthier ways to soothe yourself. For example, go for a walk, talk to a friend or practice deep breathing
- ❑ Don't skip meals or ignore true hunger signals
- ❑ Keep trigger foods away from your home and work
- ❑ Consider eliminating from your diet white flour, processed sugar, and bad fats (saturated and trans fats)



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**Food Addiction Institute**



## Do You Have Concerns About Compulsive/Binge Eating or Food Addiction?



**You are not alone.**

**There are strategies and resources that can help!**

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## What is Compulsive/Binge Eating?

**Eating food** is supposed to be enjoyable. Food is meant to nourish our bodies and leave us feeling satisfied and energized.

Yet for some people eating is a stressful event. It can lead to bingeing during a meal or wanting to continue to eat even after an ample meal.

**Uncontrollable eating episodes** (compulsive or binge eating) can be triggered by particular types of food, emotions or stress.

### Common Triggers or Cues

- ❑ Spontaneous mental images of food
- ❑ The first bite of a trigger food
- ❑ Feeling anxious, depressed, or bad
- ❑ Feeling happy or relaxed
- ❑ Feeling bored
- ❑ Judging oneself negatively
- ❑ Experiencing physical pain or discomfort
- ❑ Seeing food advertisements
- ❑ Being at social gatherings or around others who are eating
- ❑ Deeper emotional trauma issues



## Consequences of Compulsive/Binge Eating

### Consequences may include:

- ❑ Unwanted weight gain / obesity
- ❑ Health problems, such as high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease
- ❑ Social, relationship and/or work problems
- ❑ Psychological effects, such as low self-esteem, depression, feelings of anxiety and increased irritability

### Compulsive/binge eating can produce changes in the brain similar to other addictions

- ❑ The brain develops a stronger preference for foods that are calorie-rich and high in sugar, fat and salt
- ❑ Consuming a lot of these foods starts to activate the brain's reward system and trigger the release of the "pleasure hormone" dopamine, in the same way other addictive substances do – so the brain begins to want more...and more
- ❑ Sometimes, the rewarding nature of these foods can encourage eating to continue whether or not we are hungry, thus making it difficult to stop
- ❑ The behavior that results is not considered "normal" eating behavior
- ❑ A growing number of experts describe this problem as food addiction

## What is Food Addiction?

**Food addiction** is characterized by:

- ❑ Cravings for particular foods that are high in sugar, fat and salt.
- ❑ Thinking one cannot do without his/her favorite food(s)
- ❑ Preoccupation with planning, buying, or eating food- even after having eaten
- ❑ Continued overeating despite adverse medical, emotional or spiritual consequences

These compulsive episodes become more frequent with a progressive increase in:

- ❑ Amount of food consumed
- ❑ Feeling of needing, wanting and craving to consume food to provide comfort, to de-stress or to manage emotional problems

