Kendall Reagan Nutrition Center

Registered Dietitian Nutritionists
Individual nutrition appointments
Resting metabolic rate testing
Body composition
Cooking classes
Group diabetes programs

www.nutritioncenter.colostate.edu
Objectives

• Understand the relationship between diet and stress
• Identify ways to improve your diet to manage stress
• Understand stress eating and how to cope
• Appreciate the value of mindful eating
What is stress?

• Physical, mental or emotional strain
• Perceived threat
• **Stress** = what you feel
• **Stressor** = something that causes you to feel stress
• Bad stress vs. good stress
Your Body on Stress

**Short-Term Stress Response**
- Stress affects Hypothalamus
  - Sends nerve signals to Spinal Cord
  - Sends nerve signals to Adrenal Medulla
  - Secretes Adrenaline & Noradrenaline
  - Leads to:
    - Rising of blood sugar levels
    - Higher blood pressure
    - Faster breathing
    - Faster metabolism
    - Increased attention
    - Slower digestion and lower kidney function

**Long-Term Stress Response**
- Stress affects Hypothalamus
  - Releases ACTH to Anterior Pituitary Gland
  - Sends ACTH to Adrenal Cortex
  - Secretes Cortisol & Aldosterone
  - Can lead to:
    - Higher blood volume
    - Higher blood pressure
    - Processing of proteins and fat to glucose
    - Higher blood sugar levels
    - Immunosuppression
    - Cardiovascular diseases
    - Lower production of sexual hormones
    - Kidney failure

Image Credit: stress.guide
Stress is a survival response
Stress negatively affects health

- Indigestion
- Headaches
- Sleep deprivation
- Immunity
- Cardiovascular disease
- Diabetes
- Depression and anxiety
- IBS
Stress affects weight

Time/motivation to exercise
Time/motivation to cook
Stress eating
Cortisol
  ◦ Rise in blood sugar
  ◦ Rise in insulin
  ◦ Visceral fat
  ◦ Cravings

I'm starting to have anxiety about my stress eating.
What you eat affects your stress.
Your stress affects what you eat.
Food is fuel
Nutrition tips to fight stress

Tip #1 Eat regularly throughout the day
Your body needs energy all day
Your brain needs constant fuel
Eat when you are hungry
  ◦ Hunger $\rightarrow$ difficulty thinking clearly and rationally
Always start with breakfast
Include protein at each meal and snack
Stock up on healthful snacks
Nutrition tips to fight stress

Tip #2: Eat more stress-busting foods

Fish
Tea
Nuts
Citrus
Dark greens
Avocados
Nonfat milk and other dairy
Complex carbohydrates
Berries
Nutrition tips to fight stress

Tip #3: Limit eating/drinking things that could increase stress

Caffeine
Alcohol
Processed foods
Sugary foods
Nutrition tips to fight stress

**Tip #4 Don’t stress about eating!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRESSFUL</th>
<th>NON-STRESSFUL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this food bad?</td>
<td>Food does not make you bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to change everything</td>
<td>Small changes are less stressful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restriction and deprivation</td>
<td>All foods fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I eating a perfect diet?</td>
<td>Focus on what you did well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nutrition tips to fight stress

Tip #5: Don’t stress about eating....Plan ahead!

1. Think about what you want to eat next week
2. Consider your schedule and time
3. Make a menu of meals and snacks
4. Make a shopping list from the menu
5. Cross off the items you already have
6. Batch cook large meals to make leftovers
7. Prepare grab-n-go meals/snacks for busy days
What you eat affects your stress.

Your stress affects what you eat.
Food is the most abused anxiety drug. Exercise is the most underutilized antidepressant.
Stress affects what you eat

Am I a stress-eater?

Do you eat when you feel stressed?
Do you eat for reasons other than physical hunger?
Do certain foods trigger you to eat more?
Do you crave foods high in fat/sugar or both?

Do you overeat when you feel stressed?
Stress eating can be harmful

- Caffeine → 
  - cortisol, insomnia, dehydration
- Alcohol → 
  - depressant, dehydrating
- Cravings → 
  - highs and lows in mood, blood sugar
- Overeating → 
  - numbing then regret

*Do these solve stress?*
How to control stress eating?

Tip #6: Eat mindfully
Understanding mindless eating

Where do you eat your meals?

How do you eat your meals?

Do you taste your food?

Do you eat to an uncomfortable level of fullness?

Do you realize you’re eating?

Do you habitually pair eating with other activities?

Do you pay attention to how food makes you feel?
Mindful Eating—Am I hungry?

What you eat is important, but so is why and how you eat

Step #1: Am I hungry?

Physical hunger vs. “other hunger”

If physically hungry, eat!

If hungry for something else, find something to solve that hunger

If you are not hungry when you start eating, how do you know when to stop?
Mindful eating tips

- Optimize the environment, sit down to eat
- Honor the mealtime experience, find gratitude
- Be present, reduce distractions
- Use all of your senses to experience the food
- Slow down: Put silverware down or pause between bites
- Stop when you are satisfied, not full
- Be aware of how food makes you feel
In summary...What can I do!?

First step, become **aware** of stress and stress triggers

Attempt to **mitigate** stress triggers

Find healthy ways to **manage** stress
  - Meditation, adequate sleep, exercise, counselor, vacation, social activities, deep breathing, work less, set boundaries

**Use nutrition to nourish your body so you have energy to handle stressful situations.**
Stress & Eating Activity

What makes you feel stressed?

Do you eat when you are feeling stressed?

List experiences you’ve had with stress eating.

What are trigger situations that cause you to eat when you’re not physically hungry?

How did you feel afterwards?

Does stress-eating solve your stress? Why/why not?

What can you do to deal with stress instead of using food?
Thank you!
Visit: nutritioncenter.colostate.edu or Call: 970-495-5916