

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a cupcake with colorful sprinkles. The hand is positioned palm-up, and the cupcake is resting on the palm. The background is a soft, out-of-focus pinkish-red. The title '3 Ways To Curb Stress Eating' is overlaid on the image in white text.

3 Ways To Curb Stress Eating

By [Mia Simonsen](#)

Is chocolate your best friend? Do you crave a bag of chips when you're feeling stressed? You just might be an emotional eater – someone who habitually turns to food for comfort. Rather than eating in response to hunger, emotional eaters eat because of what's happening around them, and inside them – like external circumstances (a big test, breakup, family fights or even an exciting event) and feelings (most commonly anger, boredom, depression, frustration, low self-esteem, and loneliness.)

Emotional eating can also be influenced by family patterns in response to stress. Think of a mother soothing a crying toddler with a cookie, or a dad taking the kids out for an ice cream after the little league team lost a game, or celebrating an achievement with a special dinner at your favorite restaurant. Food is connection and solace – and reinforced by our culture.

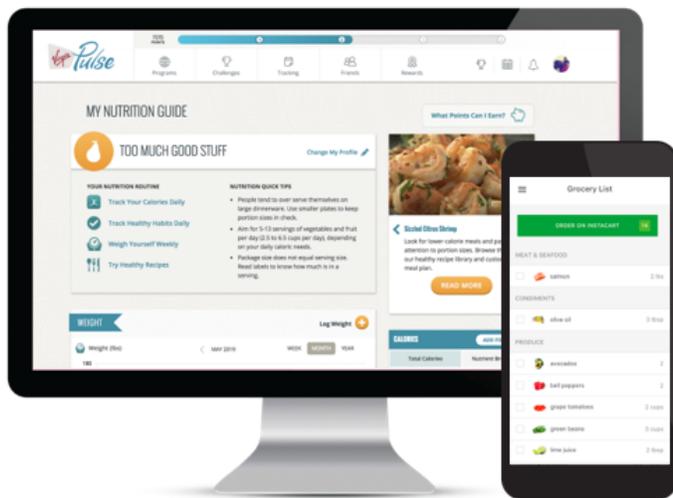
Certain foods also give a physiological high. Researchers have found that after stress hormones flood the brain, eating pleasure-seeking foods loaded with sugar and fat can help ease anxiety. So your comfort-food cravings might be your body's attempt to put the brake on chronic stress. But although it's OK to reach for an occasional cheeseburger, candy bar, or ice cream (who doesn't from time to time?), a constant diet of high-energy foods can make you feel sluggish and even lead to health problems such as diabetes and high-cholesterol.

The catch is you may not realize you are an emotional eater – until someone notices your eating patterns (eating a pint of ice cream at 2 a.m.), you've gained weight, or you realize you can't cope unless you eat food immediately. You can become aware of emotional eating by tracking what you eat and knowing the feelings or stress cues that triggered you. It's important to find other ways to cope with stress, such as relaxation skills, doing yoga or going for a walk, and getting support.

Mindful eating. A relatively recent approach to emotional eating and weight management is based on contemplative practices. Emerging research suggests mindfulness skills such as breathing practices, yoga, and being kind to yourself using self-compassion skills can help to regulate metabolic processes (like blood sugar level). It is thought that the ability to be aware of eating habits (environmental cues or distracted eating), awareness of the desire to eat, sensations of being hungry or satiated, help people engage in healthier eating.

Ready to get started?

1. Visit das.ohio.gov/wellness
2. Click the “Hub” tile
3. Go to Program Page
4. Click on “Virgin Pulse Nutrition Guide”



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- NutriQuiz, an easy survey of eating habits, provides a nutrition baseline and drives personalization and engagement.
- MyCafe helps employees find healthy food options at worksite café.
- Restaurant guidance nudges employees towards healthy meals at their favorite restaurants.
- Makes it easy, tasty and affordable to eat at home with recipes, meal planning, grocery list, grocery ordering, meal kits and deals.

