Role of stress, sleep highlighted in study of obesity

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(HealthDay)—Stress is associated with impaired sleep and increased

emotional rewarding of palatable foods, which may lead to obesity, according to research published online Aug. 28 in *Obesity Reviews*.

Nina R.W. Geiker, from the Clinical Nutrition Research Unit in Hellerup, Denmark, and colleagues summarized the scientific evidence on the role of mental stress in poor sleep, enhanced appetite, cravings, and decreased motivation for physical activity.

The researchers found that improving nutritional status and sleeping patterns may reduce the severity of stress and other mental disorders. Impaired sleep and poor nutrition may increase susceptibility to mental illness. Furthermore, stress is associated with impaired sleep and increases the emotional rewarding of palatable foods, leading to obesity and abdominal adiposity. Sleep deprivation exerts similar effects to stress in terms of increasing energy intake and an increased preference for energy dense foods. Emerging evidence suggests that stress management tools can facilitate weight loss, and research is needed to examine whether stress reduction/coping programs, improved sleep quality, and dietary supplements are feasible for reducing food cravings and improving weight management.

"As stress can cause disruption
and deprivation of sleep, and vice versa, a more holistic
approach in treating obesity is desirable," the authors write.

One author receives royalties as coauthor/editor of textbooks and diet/cookery books; one author works for several food and ingredients companies.

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