

Feeling addicted to food? Your parents' drinking habits may impact your risk

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People with a parent with a history of alcohol problems are at greater risk for showing signs of addiction to highly processed foods, a new University of Michigan study found.

These foods, such as [ice cream](#), chocolate, pizza and fries, contain

unnaturally high amounts of refined carbohydrates and fats that may trigger an addictive response in some people.

U-M researchers wanted to know if a major risk factor for addiction—a parent with [alcohol problems](#)—predicted an increased risk of addiction to highly processed foods.

As many as 1 in 5 people seem to show this clinically significant addiction to highly processed foods, marked by a loss of control over intake, intense cravings and an inability to cut down despite [negative consequences](#).

"People who have a family history of addiction may be at greater risk for developing a problematic relationship with highly processed foods, which is really challenging in a [food environment](#) where these foods are cheap, accessible and heavily marketed," said Lindzey Hoover, U-M psychology graduate student and the study's lead author.

But addictive responses didn't end with food, as people with food addiction were also more likely to exhibit [personal problems](#) with alcohol, cannabis, tobacco and vaping, the research showed.

Diets dominated by highly processed food and excessive intake of addictive substances are leading causes of preventable death in the modern world. This study suggests that interventions are needed to simultaneously reduce addictive eating and substance use.

"Public health approaches that have reduced the harm of other addictive substances, like restricting marketing to kids, may be important to consider to reduce the negative impact of highly processed foods," Hoover said.

The study appears in *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*.

More information: Lindzey V. Hoover et al, Co-occurrence of food addiction, obesity, problematic substance use, and parental history of problematic alcohol use., *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* (2022).
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