

Your tendency to overindulge these holidays could relate to your 'eating personality'. Which type are you?

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For some it's the pudding, for others it's the turkey that's hard to turn down.
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Holidays are a time when lots of us tend to overindulge in food and

drink, and many people [gain weight](#). Once gained, weight is difficult to lose, and it is likely that much of the holiday weight gain will [stay with us](#).

Overindulgence might happen for some people around relaxed and positive family gatherings, especially if COVID has limited travel and family occasions in recent years. For others, holiday gatherings hold the potential for conflict and [emotional challenges](#) and that can lead to having more to eat and drink. For some people it will be a sad and lonely period, without family or [significant others](#) around, and food might seem comforting.

Holiday gatherings are typically social, featuring foods that are delicious, [energy-dense](#) and plentiful. It can be challenging to resist the temptations on offer. Yet some people overindulge, but others do not. Why?

Research tells us how different "eating personalities" influence our tendency to overdo it at the festive buffet.

Eating personalities

The various combinations of our eating behaviors (our usual ways of behaving and thinking about food) interact with each other as "eating personalities."

Technically, eating personalities (or [eating phenotypes](#)) refer to habitual patterns of eating behaviors and thoughts that are the result of [interactions](#) between our genetic makeup, individual characteristics and the environment.

Eating personalities affect how we eat (such as how fast), what we eat (healthy or [unhealthy foods](#)), how much we eat in different situations, and importantly, why we overeat. Eating personalities are apparent [even](#)

[in infants](#) and continue to evolve and change over our lifetime. They also inform how we select specific [weight-loss strategies](#).

Our eating personalities could include:

- how we respond to prompts for overeating, such as the presence of tempting foods or drinks at a buffet lunch, and whether we sometimes lose control
- how desirable or appealing or rewarding we find different foods or drinks. It might be a glossy chocolate cake for one person but crispy roast potatoes for another
- whether we notice and respond to internal signals of fullness
- our tendency to serve large portions and eat until the plate is clean
- whether we are able to wait until we start feeling hungry again to begin eating, rather than being guided by the clock or a tempting snack
- our capacity to stick to longer-term goals in the presence of tempting foods or drinks
- how fast we eat and whether we tend to maintain this pace or slow down during the course of eating
- whether we are "[emotional eaters](#)" who eat when we feel down or to celebrate success.

5 ideas for eating according to your personality

Research [published](#) this year, based on a randomized clinical trial with 217 adults, indicates that knowing your eating personality can help identify strategies to manage food intakes and weight. A second recent [study of 165](#) people supports these findings.

Matching strategies to your particular eating [personality traits](#) could help you manage or avoid overindulgence.

1. The overeater

If eating when you're not actually hungry is a component of your eating personality, improving awareness of hunger versus other triggers for eating [when you feel full](#), and developing skills in responding to these cues before deciding to eat, [could help](#).

2. The food admirer and impulsive eater

If high attraction to food is a factor, and you have difficulty resisting, acknowledging the attractiveness of food cues and practicing using avoidance, distraction or resistance strategies [may be effective](#).

3. The emotional eater

People who recognize they eat for emotional reasons might try [other strategies](#) such as mindfulness, walking or listening to music to work through their feelings.

4. The plate cleaner

If resisting food is hard once it's on your plate, choosing [smaller portions](#) could help, along with developing awareness of fullness cues, or selecting some food but saving some for later in a separate location.

Some [young children](#) do this naturally, spreading holiday chocolates or treats over days or weeks.

5. The speed eater

If eating quickly means you tend to eat too much, pay greater attention to your [eating speed](#) during the meal and attempt to slow down by interspersing eating with other things like chatting or drinking water.

Acknowledging the challenges

It is a [common experience](#) to have tried, and sometimes failed, to temper [food](#) intakes during holiday periods and celebrations.

Food is a central part of holiday celebrations—it provides social and cultural connection, and is a source of enjoyment. However, if avoiding overindulgence is a priority for your health and well-being, it is worth exploring your eating personality. This is a path to a better understanding of overindulgence, and possibly to strategies for moderating what you eat and how much, during the holiday period and beyond.

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