

# Obesity and food restrictions proven to be associated with less food enjoyment

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Researchers from the University of Granada (UGR) belonging to the Mind, Brain and Behavior Research Center (CIMCYC, from its name in Spanish) and the Faculty of Business and Economics have proven that

adolescents who suffer from obesity feel less food enjoyment than those who have a normal weight. In addition, their work reveals that even trivial restrictions on food intake (that is, temporary diets) are associated with a reduction in pleasure.

For this work, published in the journal *Food Quality and Preference*, the researchers analyzed the emotional reactions of a large sample of 552 adolescents between 11 and 17 years old during the visualization of images of sweet foods.

The researchers observed that those adolescents who reported different types of dietary restrictions (different types of diet, dieting very often, skipping breakfast, eating less frequently, etc.), along with those who were obese and those who had [unhealthy behaviors](#) unrelated to [food](#) (such as smoking or having insufficient sleep), felt less pleasure, attraction and desire to eat the highly palatable foods they were looking at (images of sweets, donuts, ice cream, chocolate crêpes, etc.).

Laura Miccoli, main author of this study, says, "Adolescence, typically associated with greater body dissatisfaction, is a key stage for the development of risky eating behaviors, related both to uncontrolled restrictions on [food intake](#) –which may lead to the development of eating disorders– and with the stabilization of overweight and obesity." Hence the importance of studies that approach both food-related disorders from an integrative perspective.

## **A pioneering study**

The research comprises the first study to examine adolescents' emotions toward sweet food cues based on a constellation of risk behaviors, related to both obesity and eating disorders.

In the light of the results, the UGR scientists point out that those

adolescents who feel more pleasure or enjoyment when eating "have a healthy relationship with food, and this pleasure may be a possible protective factor against eating and weight-related disorders."

Therefore, "consistent with recent prevention strategies, it is important to change the perspective on the enjoyment of food with respect to the prevention of obesity, banishing the idea that we should avoid the [pleasure](#) of eating. On the contrary: we should take advantage of it, and make food enjoyment a tool for [healthy eating](#)," Miccoli says.

**More information:** Laura Miccoli et al. Adolescent emotions toward sweet food cues as a function of obesity and risky dieting practices, *Food Quality and Preference* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.foodqual.2018.03.006](#)

Provided by University of Granada

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