



## The Relationship Between Excessive Food Desire and Nutritional Status in Patients Who Has Major Depression

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To cite this article: Fatma Tuğba GÜNAY, Science, Volume 4, No. 8-5, 2022, p. 201 – 212. - 0099-0001-2210-0111.

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ISSN: 2667-9515

Barcode: 977266795001

Editors Group:

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""• Current Science Multidisciplinary Academic Journal with Review Panel is a monthly multidisciplinary academic"" ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("CURRENT SCIENCE") ("CURRENT SCIENCE") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia")

journal with a multi-science peer-review." ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies -



Current Science Georgia”)

- The magazine is published monthly.

""The magazine will be at the subscriber's address in the first week of the month."" ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("CURRENT SCIENCE") ("CURRENT SCIENCE") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies – Current Science Georgia")

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"" • Response or rejection time for applications varies between 30 and 90 days."" ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("CURRENT SCIENCE") ("CURRENT SCIENCE") ("CURRENT SCIENCE") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies – Current Science Georgia") ("Scientific Studies - Current Science Georgia")



## Abstract

People may experience some psychological diseases due to both environmental and genetic conditions. Major depression, which is one of these mood disorders, is that the psychologically disturbed person experiences intense feelings of sadness, helplessness, guilt, unhappiness, inadequacy, worthlessness, and grief; It is a psychological disease in which pessimism, weakness and not being able to enjoy life, as well as physical symptoms, major changes in sleep patterns and deterioration in eating patterns are seen.

It is known that major depression, which causes major changes in people's mood, relationships, and behaviors, is also highly related to their eating habits. Therefore, in the treatment of



depression, in addition to the use of psychotherapy and medication, some changes in the eating habits of the person will help the treatment.

One of the things that a person with major depression is most curious about is when this disease will end. Because people who have been diagnosed with major depression often have the feeling that this situation is permanent for them and will not go away again. On the one hand, they want it to end. If psychological treatment is taken, this situation can be overcome with both psychotherapy and drug treatment, albeit a bit challenging, patiently. 85% or more of major depression cases benefit from the usual and rapidly effective treatment modalities that are generally known. Untreated cases improve in 6-24 months. In 5-10% of cases, it takes more than two years. This may vary from person to person. However, in cases where treatment is received, major depression can be overcome much more easily. This will improve in a much shorter time, especially if the person helps the therapist to correct himself and does not rely only on drugs but tries to do something for himself.

During the treatment of major depression, there will be changes in your eating habits. These are conditions such as overeating or not eating at all. If you want major depression mood disorder to pass faster and you want to feel better, you need to pay attention to your diet. While there are extreme changes in your eating habits, it will be much more difficult to get yourself together if you allow it. Therefore, you should be careful not to change your nutritional status. If there are changes you can make, it should be to eat a healthier diet to overcome major depression. Because nutritional status is related to human psychology, and disruptions in human psychology cause nutrition to deteriorate, which is an undesirable situation.

## 1- Introduction

In this article, subjects such as the relationship between excessive food cravings and nutritional status in major depression patients will be discussed.

Before examining the relationship between excessive food cravings and nutritional status in patients with major depression, it is necessary to know what major depression is. Major depression is a mood disorder that completely affects a person's life by decreasing his interest in daily activities and causes emotional depression. Having major depression can be caused by hormonal disorders, but it can also be hereditary or develop due to environmental factors such



as economic status. Environmental factors become much more impressive, especially for people who have lost loved ones. In addition, there are many examples of people who think that their life is based on failure. This type of depression can also occur due to the internal self-injury of the person without noticing the environmental factors. That is, the person is constantly triggered from the outside, but does not notice it and throws it inside every time. Such situations also have important effects on the emergence of major depression. Your symptoms must continue for a while before you realize that you are in major depression. If you show these symptoms for two weeks, it does not mean that you are depressed, but if you have been experiencing these conditions for several months, this will inform you that you are in major depression and you should take precautions. These symptoms are.

- a.) *On average, starting to feel exhausted every day or experiencing a loss of energy*
- b.) *Feeling worthless, inadequate, insecure, unhappy, or guilty almost every day*
- c.) *Experiencing sleep problems that disrupt sleep patterns, such as insomnia (inability to sleep) or hypersomnia (oversleeping).*
- d.) *Loss of interest in life activities, activities that used to be enjoyed very much are now done with no pleasure or not done at all*
- e.) *Inability to rest or slow movement, slow thinking, constant thinking*
- f.) *Persistent thoughts of death and suicide*
- g.) *Deterioration of concentration, inability to recover at all and excessive indecision*
- h.) *Significant weight loss or significant weight gain (approximately 5% of total body mass)*

When these symptoms are looked at depending on the mood in general, they can be detected and diagnosed a little more difficult. However, it can be diagnosed more easily in cases that change physically, such as severe weight gain or rapid weight loss. Because human psychology has a lot to do with eating habits, and a sudden change in people's eating habits is generally a symptom of a psychological disorder, a high rate of major depression.

## **2- Changes to be Made in Eating Habits to Easier Recover from Major Depression Mood Disorder**

Relief from major depression is something every major depressive patient wishes for. The first thing you should do when you realize you have symptoms of major depression is to seek



therapy. While receiving psychological support, you will receive both psychotherapy and, where necessary, medication. In addition, what you need to do is to pay attention to your nutritional status. In cases of major depression, sudden changes in your nutritional status may have bad consequences for you. Losing weight or gaining weight suddenly can push you to another psychological illness, such as anorexia nervosa, in addition to depression. Therefore, people should make minimal changes in their nutritional status after being diagnosed with depression. And this change should be the changes that will increase the health that an expert dietitian will say consciously.

First, the first thing you need to get into your body should be omega 3. Omega-3 is one of the most important nutrients recommended for use in the treatment of depression. Depression may increase in cases such as the lack of this nutrient, which is used in important functions in the brain. At the same time, since this substance affects brain functions, situations such as deficiency trigger depression. For this reason, the amount of omega-3 can be increased with foods with high omega-3 nutritional value such as fish, hazelnuts, almonds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, flax seeds, purslane, and spinach. However, if you have certain diseases, it would be more appropriate to consume some of these foods consciously in a certain proportion, with the advice of a doctor, in cholesterol, heart and blood pressure patients.

Taking vitamins regularly is also something that people who want to get over major depression faster during depression should know. In cases where the vitamin is low, depression is triggered and can lead to a more serious condition. Such situations are undesirable because, due to the structure of human psychology, once it is broken, it takes effort to recover and the more it is broken, the more difficult it becomes. For this reason, as soon as it is noticed that psychological problems are experienced, the person should meet with a psychotherapist. As we said, daily vitamin intake should be given importance. Particular attention should be paid to the intake of B, C, D vitamins and magnesium. B vitamin with grains such as wheat, bulgur, and lentils; Vitamin C can be taken into the body with foods such as orange, kiwi, lemon, broccoli, and pepper. These are the nutrients with the highest concentration of certain vitamins. While the need for vitamin D can be met from foods such as fish, milk, and eggs with sunlight; Magnesium can be obtained from foods such as cocoa, sunflower seeds, bran, almonds, and flax seeds. ("The importance of nutrition in depression") If the balance between these is established, the body can take the vitamins it needs in a day, and this helps to overcome major depression.



Protein-containing foods are also one of the most important elements that must be taken in major depression disease and in overcoming major depression. If you take more protein-rich foods, you will both feel good psychologically and prevent the diseases you may experience physically. For this reason, it is recommended to increase the production of serotonin hormone by consuming foods such as chicken, fish, eggs, kidney beans, hazelnuts, peanuts, which have high protein value, and thus to reduce the symptoms of depression.

Antioxidant ensures the removal of toxic, i.e., poisonous, or harmful substances from the body, they are mostly recommended because of this feature. And these antioxidants also protect the body from the damage of free radicals. (“Brain Boosting Foods”) Thanks to this feature, it strengthens the immune system. It also has many positive psychological effects. Some studies and research have made it possible to determine that people with major depression have low antioxidant levels. Therefore, foods rich in antioxidants should be consumed. In this way, one can get rid of depression more easily. The consumption of tomatoes, broccoli, blackberries, black grapes, garlic, and spinach, which are quite sufficient in terms of antioxidants, should be given great importance in this depression period.

It has been determined that people with major depression resort to alcohol and cigarettes to forget or at least reduce their problems and sorrows, pains, and to distract themselves, especially at the beginning of the depression state. However, this is quite unhealthy. Substances in alcohol and cigarettes trigger depression. At the same time, since the substances in it are addictive, even if the person is not depressed, it leads the person towards depression. As well as the psychological damage, the physical damage to the body is also very high. It has been observed that there is an increase in alcohol and cigarette use when depressed and in the ongoing processes of depression. It is very dangerous to drink alcohol, especially while taking medication supplements. It can lead to one's death. For this reason, from the moment of diagnosis of depression, both alcohol and cigarette use should be gradually reduced and finally stopped completely. Although not as much as alcohol and cigarettes, caffeine, which is one of the substances that the body constantly wants after getting used to, also triggers depression. Situations such as excessive caffeine intake create psychological stress and uneasiness as well as heart diseases. Reducing the use of caffeine after the diagnosis of depression will enable people to overcome depression more easily.





In cases where the body cannot take the substances it needs to take daily, it can take it into a state of self-defense and trigger depression when it feels powerless without the need for an external factor. One of these substances is water. There is a certain amount of water that must be taken daily. And the lack of this amount of water causes the person to suffer both psychologically and physically in many issues. Human water needs: 1500-2000 mL/day (8-10 glasses of water) with drinking water, 1000 mL/day with food or beverages, 260 mL/day with water formed because of metabolism. The balance of water in the body is vital, the daily requirement is simply calculated by the equation  $35 \text{ mL} \times \text{body weight (kg)}$ . The daily water requirement of the body must be met. The amount of water taken into the body in much less than the specified amount will not be enough and if this situation continues for a while, it can lead to diseases. In addition to water, chamomile, lemon balm and linden teas known for their relaxing effect during the day; Consuming antioxidant-rich green tea also calms you down and helps you get out of depression.

### 3- The Effect of Major Depression on Nutritional Habits

An adequate and balanced diet is a healthy individual. This is one of the most important prerequisites. Grow, develop, be a healthy and productive individual nutrients necessary for ingestion and use called nutrition. Nutrition is a It is a need and if this need is not met, the person will die. nutrition, as well biologically and psychologically quite is important. Individuals, anger, or self-feeling under pressure etc. some feeling like more food than usual they tend to consume. Same way in situations where they experience intense emotions (excitement, fear, extreme stress etc.) feeling of not eating at all, not being able to eat or eating too much the effect of their condition on nutrition can be explained with These conditions, which cause changes in eating habits, as the influence of factors on nutrition is expressed. Studies show that different emotional states how it affects individuals' eating attitudes examined. This research has been As a result, some differences between individuals' depressive mood, stress, anxiety, negative emotions such as alexithymia and psychological disorders in general. increased food consumption and detecting that it disrupts the eating habits has done. Affecting emotional eating and emotional eating research on factors can provide opportunities to prevent obesity health education interventions in the planning and implementation may have some benefits. Some emotional states digestion (such as joy, fear, anger, sadness, etc.) and



thanks to metabolism in the process, motivation to eat, food frequency, amount of food, and choice of food. have been found to affect eating responses. To summarize nutritional habits of people other than psychological factors may be affected.

There are many factors that can cause depression. And among these factors, studies have been conducted showing that deficiencies of some nutrients or an improper diet may be effective and correcting them may help to regress depression. According to the BMC Medical Journal, the information published about this study; A special diet without processed (refined), packaged, fried and sweet foods was applied to a group of people with moderate to severe depression with one-on-one dietitian consultation for 12 weeks. And while there was a significant regression in the depression scale of the people who followed this diet compared to the other groups, it was determined that 32% of the group recovered, that is, they no longer had the criteria for depression and got rid of depression. So, to summarize, depression has a lot of influence on eating. To get rid of depression, which affects the diet, it is necessary to get support. Because as depression progresses, we can easily see that even when we consider only the weight situation, it can cause great physical diseases.

#### **4- About Night Eating Syndrome that May Occur Due to Depression**

Depression is considered a variable that is thought to be very effective in the emergence of Night Eating Syndrome and research have been done on this subject.

Individuals encounter many negative situations almost every day in their lives, and almost all of them show different reactions to these negative situations they encounter. Many people find it easy to feel better and distracted during times of stress, when they are sad or bored prefers to eat. According to research, many individuals with eating disorders experience depressive symptoms.

Coping with unhappiness is also thought to be to reduce the level of stress experienced. Individuals with psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, food consumption control cannot determine enough food. And healthy people in terms of maintaining body weight They experience more difficulties. Especially in the face of many negative emotions such as sadness. It is argued that individuals change their eating habits and eat much as a means of coping with the problem they experience. In addition to stress factors,





people with NES reported more frequent depressive moods.(Gluck et al. 2001, 264-267). However, interestingly, it has been found that individuals with NES, which increases due to depression, decrease in their mood after 16:00. (Birketvedt et al. 1999, 657-663). That is, these patients are thought to be more depressed at night, and this depressive state is the exact opposite of the reduction in nocturnal depressive mood, unlike that observed in endogenous depression.

It is also noteworthy that some etiological factors increase the co-occurrence of depression and NES becomes an attractive subject. Melatonin plays an important role in the etiology of both depression and NES. Melatonin triggers and maintains sleep. Therefore, decreased melatonin levels are also associated with sleep disturbance (Hansen et al. 1987) and it has been found that this situation is frequently encountered in depressed people. (Kennedy et al. 1989, 73-78). Depressed individuals, similarly, melatonin, which is also seen in individuals with NES, increases at night, and the weakening of this nightly increase appears to play an effective role in night awakenings. The effect of stress factor on the symptoms of depressed individuals and individuals with NES appears to be a partner. NES Studies were designed to examine its relationship with the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA) axis. In this study, corticotropin releasing hormone (CRH)-induced ACTH and cortisol responses were found to be significantly lower in people with NES compared to the control group. (Birketvedt et al. 1999, 657-663). Based on this finding, the authors concluded that HPA axis depletion in people with NES. They not only defend it, but also think that stress has a stimulating function on NES. Moreover, The HPA axis is also associated with insomnia and depression, which are the most important components of NES. It is known that this situation is caused by stress.

## 5- Emotional Hunger in Major Depression - Emotional Eating

Generally behaving indifferently, generally reluctant towards every subject, feeling of emotional collapse, not being able to enjoy anything compared to the past, constant decrease in energy during the day, looking at life completely pessimistic, feeling worthless and remorseful in every action or emotion, guilt regardless of guilt feeling, sleep disorders, appetite markedly increase or decrease, and manifested by symptoms such as reluctance in all sexual matters depression-related disorders in Turkey and It is an important public health problem in the world. Depression is the most threatening public health and people in society. counted as one of the



mental health problems. And increasing prevalence in society, due to this the risk of becoming chronic, the increase in suicidal tendencies of individuals possibility, the ability caused by depression loss and its economic consequences. It is also known as an important mental problem because of this. Depression carries a risk of becoming chronic, but besides it, work and social life losses in activities of daily living disability due to negative results among all medical diseases in terms of placed in fourth place.

A lot of research has been done on major depression and nutrition has been counted as an important factor influencing major depression. It has been determined that depressive features are more common in people who have an unhealthy diet. These people generally started to eat unhealthier after they became depressed. In addition to the sudden and unhealthy changes in their diet, the fact that they start to eat more can also be called "emotional eating".

Emotional eating behavior usually occurs because of feeling and constantly continuing and repetitive emotions such as stress, anxiety, fear, boredom, sadness, loneliness, or inadequacy. To suppress negative emotions, this desire is turned into eating behavior. Things like the desire to eat or forcing oneself to eat even if they don't want to occur to feel powerful or forget about it.

It is possible to observe the behavior of eating as a way of coping with the intense emotion experienced because of the stress or sudden unexpected events that happen to individuals in daily life, and this is a sign of emotional eating.

The act of emotional eating causes many harms to people's lives, not only psychologically but also physiologically. As a result of continuous emotional eating behaviors, the person may have many physical ailments such as weight problems, cardiovascular diseases, sugar, and cholesterol, even though they do not have it.

Getting help from a therapist will be an important step in getting the emotional eating problem under control. Because emotional eating may not be just a behavior problem that today brings us. Emotional connections we bring from the past, traumas, problems that are thought to have been overcome but not overcome, relational problems can also occur because of all kinds of evaluations about ourselves.

In addition to therapeutic support from the therapist, raising awareness on eating behavior, learning to distinguish between eating, which is a physical need, and emotional eating, and



relieving stress by doing more physical activity are important steps that can be taken to stop emotional eating.

One of the important things to do to eliminate emotional eating behavior is to notice. A distinction should be made between whether you feel physically hungry or whether you want to eat because of stress.

It is important at this stage to know what time of the day you eat. People generally get hungry and eat at the same time interval. Especially people who adhere to their daily routines often show hunger at the same time of the day. That's why it's important to follow up. If a person wants to eat when he is stressed outside of these hours, this indicates an emotional desire to eat.

There are clear and distinct differences between emotional hunger and physical hunger that can be easily recognized. Emotional hunger comes out of nowhere and makes you feel the need to eat at that very moment. At the same time, the person may want to eat the things he never wanted to eat at that moment. He may eat more than he normally does. But he does this unconsciously. While doing the act of eating, he only has the subject of stress in his mind, so he does not care how much he eats, does not notice, or lives for a few minutes when he acts unconsciously. In physical hunger, the feeling of hunger gradually manifests itself. There is a greater tolerance for hunger. It is eaten at certain time intervals and a patient attitude can be displayed until it is time to eat.

Emotional hunger, on the other hand, does not tolerate time, so it causes desire for foods that can be consumed quickly and easily. Which can lead to eating very unhealthy things. In particular, the foods that individuals prefer during emotional eating are more carbohydrate, more sugary, packaged, or fast food and its derivatives.

The most challenging part of emotional eating is the feeling of fullness. Because individuals who engage in emotional eating generally cannot feel the feeling of satiety because their heads are full. However, this emotional eating situation turns into physical pain after a while and is only noticed when it turns into physical pain. If people generally feel feelings of regret, guilt, and shame after eating, you can easily understand that this is an emotional eating behavior. Finding the triggers and causes that cause emotional eating will be a facilitating factor in controlling emotional eating behavior. So, it's better for you to recognize the connections between your emotions and eating.



The triggers of emotional eating must be found. Yes, emotional eating is generally linked to feelings of inward stress. However, it is the source of stress that needs to be found and learned. That's why research should be done. Other reasons for emotional eating are.

## **a.) Stress**

Stress has several different physiological effects on eating behavior that are clearly visible. Stress causes different and sudden rises in certain hormones or cortisol levels. For this reason, the individual's body desires to consume intensely sweet foods or excessively oily food to balance itself. When this situation continues, it causes a very unhealthy rapid weight gain in the person, and in addition, if the person suddenly consumes fatty or sweet foods because there is no feeling of satiety, the person has trouble digesting and suffers a lot.

## **b.) Intense Emotions and Thoughts**

Anger at oneself for several changeable reasons, anger at others' attitudes towards the person or other people and events in the environment, anger towards the past, extreme fear arising from the traumas of the person, the person's feeling that something might happen to the people around him or to other living things. Eating behavior is frequently observed to suppress emotions such as fear, anxiety about past mistakes, anxiety about future uncertainty, anxiety about events or psychological diseases that occur for no reason, suppress emotions such as anger, embarrassment, and numb oneself.

## **c.) Boredom**

Unemployment, bad times spent in education, long vacation periods, short-term fights in friendships, long-term deterioration in friendships, family problems, relationship problems, a feeling of psychological inadequacy, a person's dislike for not being able to comply with the perception of beauty created by social media, etc. comes up with many examples. In this process, it is known that the person tends to eat as a method of coping with the feeling of



emptiness in his life. Or it is known that it may result from the emergence of the thought that the person can complete the issues he feels inadequate with the act of eating emotionally.

## **d.) Childhood Nutritional Problems**

The food that comes after a success as a child and is eaten enthusiastically, the process of the individual returning from childhood to adulthood, and this situation that was made as a child in adult life also appears as a trigger for emotional eating. For example, going to any fast-food place after every successful test makes every child happy and feel good. However, this situation easily settles in the subconscious because the child is small and then becomes a habit. This habit also triggers emotional eating action in the person. We can also explain this situation in a way that it can turn into a strategy used on eating behavior in adulthood, especially to cope with the feeling of failure. Therefore, parents should act more consciously in this regard. If he has been accustomed to such a thing in childhood, the person will find himself feeling the need to eat emotionally, especially in adulthood, in every success or failure of his every move.

When you realize your emotional eating situation, you should try to stop this emotional eating act and return to healthy eating. To establish a healthy eating routine, you first need to have some patience. However, you should not delay. Instead of doing things like procrastination, allow as little as you can and don't try to be the best. Such psychological situations can be much more difficult, especially because you are depressed. Being patient is just as valid in the treatment of depression as it is in the act of emotional eating that you do due to depression. If you have a weight problem or a similar condition caused by emotional eating behavior, it may be a much better idea for you to consult a dietitian and go to a health checkup. But don't set yourself a weight loss goal when trying to establish a healthy eating routine. Your goal should not be to gain or lose weight. The main goal here should be to return to the old healthy routine or try to start a much healthier eating routine than before. One of the best things you can do about this is to keep a food diary, it can be very helpful especially for recognizing the connection between your eating behavior and your emotions and for understanding yourself better. And when you eat unhealthily, you realize it and try to change it.

It is also very important to keep track of your eating times. In this food diary, it is important to write down the food you eat, as well as when you eat or what you eat for. We can distinguish



emotional eating from physical eating by considering all aspects. You will write in the diary to be kept.

Answering the question of when emotional eating occurs most often allows you to overcome emotional eating and prevent the possibility of unhealthy weight gain during your depression period. For example, if you've had a long day and find yourself eating a packet of chips when you get home from work, it could mean that a stress factor at work triggered you. Or if you are on a day where you feel successful, you can reflect this on emotional eating. Developing healthy eating strategies is a must. You can find a lot of resources on the internet about this subject, if you wish, you can buy books and read them. Emotional eating behavior is usually instantaneous, such as consuming quickly while standing, or on the sofa, in front of the TV, to distract the focus from eating. Instead of doing this, it will be healthier for you to have your meals by sitting at the dinner table and giving your full attention to the food. Especially while eating, you should not occupy your mind with other things, and you should not stress yourself. Having other things on your mind while you eat, especially if you think about traumatic things, you may find yourself eating every time you are triggered by your trauma. For this reason, you should not have stressful things in your head while eating. Ask close friends and family members to provide as much support as possible as you transition to a healthy eating routine. Let them help you organize your meals and watch you while you eat. Be sure to get feedback from them. The support of your family, friend or partner will always be very important to you. You should not neglect to open yourself up to them about it. Knowing that you are in major depression and that you are constantly eating emotional food because of major depression provides support. This will help you overcome depression much more easily. You should not be ashamed or afraid of your surroundings in these matters. Major depression is quite normal, and anyone can get sick. When a person has any physical illness, he can go to the hospital. He should also do this when he realizes that he has a psychological disorder. Hiding it or not trying to cure it causes the person to grow this disease. This can progress until the death of the person. In this way, you can easily overcome your emotional eating situation due to depression.

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