What is the relationship between ADHD and obesity / eating habits?

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Adults with ADHD have unhealthy eating habits, leading to overweight/obesity, with the odds ratio increasing with age. They are also suffering more from eating disorders.

Individuals with ADHD have a higher body mass index (BMI) and a higher prevalence of obesity, with the odds ratio increasing with age. Indeed, the pooled prevalence increase by about 70% in adults and 40% in children. Additionally, individuals with ADHD suffer more from eating disorders (OR=3.82*), especially binge eating (OR=4.13).

Several mechanisms have been suggested to account for this association including shared genetic transmission, dysregulation of dopamine, mood lability, psychiatric comorbidities, and low participation in physical activity, impulsivity, inattention, and poor eating habits. It was found that both children and adults with ADHD consume less healthy foods (such as vegetables, fruits, and dairy products) and more unhealthy foods (fatty, sweet and processed foods, such as snacks, candies, “fast food” and “junk food.”)

*OR=3.82 means 3.82 times more likely

About the Author
Shirley Hershko is the director of the diagnostic and support center, a senior teacher, and a researcher at the Hebrew University in Israel. Her study won an award at the World Congress on ADHD.

Further Reading: