# Chapter 55 Diet and Stress

# Interactions with Emotions and Behavior

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# Abstract

There is no clear consensus on whether stress reliably leads to increased or decreased caloric intake, although shifts in food choice seem likely. Research suggests the relationship between stress and changes in food intake is moderated by individual differences in psychological and physiological pathways as well as the type of stressor and the foods available. These differences make some individuals particularly susceptible to eating more energy-dense foods in response to stress. Increased intake, or changes in food choice, may be part of an individual’s stress-coping response, although an alternative account is that stress shifts motivational and attentional resources to fundamental habitual levels leading to selection of salient and “safe” foods. In either case, this stress response could place individuals at increased risk of excess weight gain. Real-life stressors are diverse and their relationships with eating behaviors are similarly dynamic, creating a challenging but fascinating area for future study.