

# The 7 signs YOU MAY BE ADDICTED TO FOOD

For plenty of people, food is one of the most joyous elements of life. But according to Dr Bunmi Aboaba, a recovery coach specialising in food addiction, you can indeed have too much of a good thing – she details a quick guide to figuring out if you could do with taking a look at your relationship to food

One of the most significant ways you can be kind to your body is to nourish it correctly. To do that, some people eat exact, scientifically controlled diets – often those for whom their health is their livelihood. Others pay little attention to the amounts of, and what they're eating, and overindulge to an unhealthy extent. Most of us are in the middle: we try to eat healthily, but we do enjoy our treats.

However, it can be easy to acquire bad habits through no fault of our own. It's hard to be objective about what and how much we are eating. Emotions come into play; there are rationalisations and denial. There are also no hard and fast boundaries; what is healthy for one person could be more than enough for another. So how much is acceptable and how much is going too far?

In order to understand your relationship with food and identify whether your eating may be problematic in the form of a food addiction, take some time to examine your behaviour around food. Here are seven signs you may be addicted to food:

### Thinking about food more than usual

Has food become a major subject in your internal dialogue? Are you often thinking 'how long until lunch / snack break / dinner?' It may not be the food itself, but the idea of the food. The buying, the unwrapping or preparing. The thought of buying something nice, just for you, that no one else knows about.

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Maybe it's the amount – 'have I got enough chocolate in case I wake up in the middle of the night and feel hungry? Better buy some more just in case...'

### Not telling the truth about how much you eat, or hiding what you do eat

Have you ever bought extra food, then eaten it before getting home, so that no one would see? Do you eat in the car to avoid a confrontation about food? Is there a stash in the house, perhaps biscuits hidden away? Do you say to yourself: 'I have to hide some food away or someone else will eat it first!'

If you are hiding, concealing or not admitting the truth to others, it suggests you already know that it is a problem. How much are you hiding from yourself?

### Making more excuses than rules

'It's just one more slice...' – does this sound familiar? 'If I skip lunch tomorrow, I can have extra dessert tonight...' – but of course, lunch still happens as usual... Do you set yourself targets, and then when you fail those targets, make an excuse for yourself? 'I watched a sad film', 'Look at the state of the world!', 'Someone said something mean to me'...

When you make a plan, buy the groceries, and know when you are going to cook and eat, then – something happens. A friend has a break up. Someone in the family is ill. Do those plans go out the window, just so you can be the hero and go save someone?

### Other areas of life are suffering

Has your performance slowed down? Are you still able to put in the hours, get work finished on time? Or are you feeling tired, both mentally and physically? Do you skimp on family time, work time, just to have more alone time with food? Do you put off doing exercise, because you know that it will hurt



stories we need to be talking about

first before getting better? Are other people starting to pick up the slack?

### Those physical changes are becoming noticeable

If you continue to eat in an excessive manner, the physical effects won't take long to show. If you are eating unhealthy things, this can also show up in acne, bad breath or dental problems. You might be out of breath more often.

At the more extreme end, this can go into diabetes, heart problems, liver problems. Because these changes happen gradually, and we get used to them, it can be a shock to wake up one morning and no longer have that body that worked so well 10 years ago.

### Denial, guilt and low self-esteem – the unholy trinity

Addiction is all about mental health. Eating, denying that you have eaten, feeling guilty, low self-esteem, and then

eating to get rid of those feelings. This can turn into a never-ending cycle. If your mental health is suffering, it might be time to make some changes.

### Having cravings, even after eating a full meal

After eating a satisfying meal, one that contains all the good stuff and plenty of it, is there a voice in your head saying 'but what would really finish the meal off is...'? You are full, your body knows it is full, but there is that nagging feeling of wanting more. This is a sign that your brain has got used to the

dopamine rush that some foods give. The level which used to mean 'enough' has now gone up. It is not the food that you need; it is the brain chemicals that you have started to get used to.

### The fix

If you have three or more of these signs, it could be a warning that it is time to do something. Consult a doctor, see a nutritionist or other health professional. It can often be much easier to go to a qualified stranger than to talk to friends. There will be no judgement; as they will have seen it all before.

Dr Bunmi Aboaba is a Recovery Coach specialising in food addiction, helping clients to achieve a healthy relationship with food to meet long-term health goals. Dr Bunmi's work covers the full spectrum of disordered eating, including overeating, compulsive eating, emotional eating, addicted eating and other associated patterns. Dr Bunmi is also creator of the first Certified Food Addiction Certification to support nutritionists, personal trainers, dieticians and clinicians to help their clients achieve long-lasting results. To find out more, visit her website: [www.thefoodaddictioncoach.co.uk](http://www.thefoodaddictioncoach.co.uk), her LinkedIn page: [www.linkedin.com/in/bunmiaboaba/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/bunmiaboaba/) and on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/thefoodaddictioncoach/](http://www.facebook.com/thefoodaddictioncoach/)

