

How can people with ADHD eat healthier?

By: Dr. Shirley Hershko

People with ADHD eat unhealthier foods, despite their knowledge about the risks. Because they are more influenced by advertising, a possible intervention may be to increase the attractiveness and the convenience of healthy foods.

ADHD is associated with **unhealthy dietary patterns, which may directly lead to excess weight gain.** They consume less healthy foods (such as vegetables and fruits) and more unhealthy foods (fatty, sweet and processed foods). The **health risks associated with an unbalanced diet have become the leading factor contributing to the global burden of disease.** Hence, it is necessary to find intervention programs aimed to improve the eating patterns of individuals with ADHD.

There is a discrepancy between the unhealthy eating behavior of individuals with ADHD and their food-related perceptions. They have the

same benefit and risk food perceptions, as individuals without ADHD. Meaning **they know what is dangerous and what is better to eat but their behavior does not match their knowledge.** Therefore, it is important to focus on their environment. It has been found that **environmental factors can influence food choices** (emphasizing the attractiveness and convenience of the food). Moreover, individuals with ADHD are more influenced by advertising, compared to individuals without ADHD. **Healthy food advertisements raise their healthy food choices.** Possible explanations for this phenomenon are their impulsivity and sensitivity to rewards.



About the Author

Dr. Shirley Hershko is 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.

Resources

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