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Food craving, dietary restraint and mood

Andrew J. Hill, Claire F.L. Weaver, John E. Blundell

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Abstract

A common assumption is that dieting causes food cravings, probably as a result of food energy deprivation. This issue was investigated in a two-phase study. In phase one, 206 women completed the Dutch Eating Behaviour Questionnaire, the Three-Factor Eating Questionnaire and a food craving scale. A correlational analysis showed food craving to be only weakly related to dietary restraint, but highly and significantly correlated with external eating, emotional eating and susceptibility to hunger. In phase two, ten women who regularly experienced food cravings and ten who rarely craved food kept prospective records of their food intake, daily mood and food craving episodes. There were few differences in eating behaviour, although the cravers tended to consume slightly more daily energy than the non-cravers. The cravers had higher ratings of boredom and anxiety during the day, and dysphoric mood was prominent prior to the cravings themselves. Food deprivation does not appear to be a necessary condition for food cravings to occur. Rather, food cravings are closely associated with mood, in particular as an antecedent to craving and also as a consequence of craving.

References

- A.J. Hill et al. Dieting concerns have a functional effect on the behaviour of 9-year girls British Journal of Clinical Psychology (1991)

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