

Effect of stress and eating practices of Saudi Arabian women

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of stress on the types of foods and beverages selected by Saudi Arabian women during perceived stressful and non-stressful (normal) conditions. Three hundred and twenty-two women above 18 years of age participated in the research. A validated and reliable 47-itemized stress eating survey was posted on the Internet for 3 months using InQsit (version 20.0.0, 2011, SPSS Chicago, IL), a comprehensive online assessment instrument. The link was made available to women only residing in Saudi Arabia. During stressful conditions, 69.3% (n=216) of participants had a change in appetite and of those who experienced a change, 53.7% (n=116) experienced an increase in appetite. Less than 10% (9.2%; n=28) of participants indicated they placed "great" effort in selecting and eating healthy foods when under stressful conditions. Participants reported greater snacking practices during stressful conditions (72.6%). Contrary to non-stressful conditions, there was a decrease in the variety of foods selected from various food groups (i.e. meats, grains, dairy, fruits, and vegetables) during stressful conditions. There was no significant difference in beverage consumption among participants during stressful and non-stressful conditions. This research suggests, when stressed, Saudi Arabian women experience increased appetite, have a tendency to increase snacking, resulting in selection of limited variety of foods within each food group.

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