

Intuitive Eating and The Relationship Between Intuitive Eating and Health

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Abstract

Intuitive eating is a health approach which promotes a positive attitude towards the body, food, food related behaviors and physical activity. It is characterized by eating based on physiological hunger and satiety cues rather than situational and emotional cues and is associated with psychological well-being. Several studies have shown the importance of intuitive eating for improved health, including lower chances of being overweight, lower total cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein and blood pressure, lower chances of binge eating, emotional eating, external eating and eating disorder symptoms, lowered concerns with body image and better diet quality. Intuitive eating has been proposed as a more natural and effective alternative to weight management methods. The aim of this review is to investigate the intuitive eating and the relationship between intuitive eating and health.

Keywords: Health, intuitive eating, weight management

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Introduction

Intuitive eating has grown as a health approach over the past 20 years and is being used health and wellness research (Barad *et al.*, 2019). The term intuitive eating was defined as the non-diet approach by Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch who are Registered Dietitian in 1995. Aspects of intuitive eating including a rejection of ‘diets’, a discouragement of labelling foods as ‘bad’, an awareness of internal hunger and satiety signals and rely on these signals to direct eating behavior (Tylka, 2006; Warren *et al.*, 2017). There are three central features of intuitive eating: ‘(a) unconditional permission to eat when hungry and what food is desired, (b) eating for physical rather than emotional reasons, and (c) reliance on internal hunger and satiety cues to determine when and how much to eat’ (Tylka, 2006).

Unconditional permission to eat (when hungry and what food is desired)

Unconditional eating; physiological hunger signals and the currently desired food reflects readiness to eat in response. Individuals who have this eating behaviour don't try to ignore their hunger signals, or they do not categorize food acceptable and unacceptable and they don't try to avoid last category (Tylka, 2006). They make food choices for both health and eating satisfaction; not using food to deal with emotions, respect the body no matter weight and shape and they are physically active for the enjoyment and health rather than calorie-burning for weight loss (Bruce and Ricciardelli, 2016). People who give themselves unconditional permission don't have binge eating behavior because their eating behaviors controlled by physical hunger and satiety signals (Tylka, 2006).

Eating for physical rather than emotional reasons

People who eat intuitively try to satisfy their emotional fluctuations. They eat to suppress the feeling of physical hunger, not for the sake of food. When they are hungry, they eat until the feeling of hunger is suppressed, and they stop to eat when they are full (Tylka, 2006).

Reliance on internal hunger and satiety cues to determine when and how much to eat

People who participate in intuitive eating are aware of both their internal hunger and their satiety signals. They trust these signals to direct their eating behaviours (Tylka, 2006). Intuitive eating behavior compatible eating behavior to irregular eating habits to consider as an alternative with the intuitive eating scale developed is determined. The first intuitive eating scale published in the literature developed and tested by Hawks, Merrill, and Madanat (2004). However, it was found that it did not provide sufficient reliability in retests. Original intuitive eating scale-1 was developed as a scale consisting of 21 items and three sub-dimensions by Tylka (2006). The Intuitive Eating Scale -2 version has been developed Intuitive eating scale-1 as revised by Tylka and Kroon Van Diest (2013). A higher score indicates higher adherence to the behavior. The aim of this review is to investigate the intuitive eating and the relationship between intuitive eating and health.

The relationships between intuitive eating and body weight

The obesity is a major public health issue resulting in chronic diseases. With the rising prevalence of obesity has come an increasing awareness of their impacts on infectious diseases like Covid-19 (Zhou *et al.*, 2021). The traditional approach to weight loss is restrict food intake and exercise more. However, it is generally unsuccessful in decreasing body weight in the long term. With intuitive eating, negative

emotional states caused by calorie-restricted diets can be reduced and thus, with the motivation gained psychological adjustment will increase. Individuals with high motivation have lower body mass index (BMI) (Van Dyke and Drinkwater, 2014). Some studies have shown that weight loss strategies to restrict food intake ineffective for a long period of time in weight loss and body weight management. Furthermore, restrictive eating has been linked with higher BMI, an increased risk of disordered eating and psychological problems like body image concerns, emotional difficulties and reduced cognitive functioning (Anglin, 2012; Bruce and Ricciardelli, 2016). However, some intuitive eating programs may help maintain weight (Anglin, 2012). The relationship between intuitive eating and BMI in adults has studied in three different studies. Individuals who have normal BMI have higher scores intuitive eating than individuals overweight and obese (Bourdier *et al.*, 2018; Ruzanska and Warschburger, 2017; Saunders *et al.*, 2018). By intuitive eating intervention as a non-diet approach, researchers have found a significant reduction in body weight after a 4-month intervention and 12-month follow-up (Gagnon-Girouard *et al.*, 2010). Of the eleven cross-sectional studies ten of them shows that individuals with intuitive eating behaviour have a significantly lower BMI than individuals without intuitive eating behaviour (Van Dyke and Drinkwater, 2014). Intuitive eating behaviour, the body's hunger focus on which nutrient in what quantities an alternative that gives a clue about how to consume due to the approach especially body weight and BMI is inversely related is reported. In this respect intuitive eating can be a supportive approach for prevention and treatment of the obesity (Camilleri *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, people who have intuitive eating behaviours tend to engage in regular physical activity (Bacon *et al.*, 2005; Brickell and Chatzisarantis, 2007). However, some studies show that there is no relationship between intuitive eating and body weight or BMI (Augustus-Horvath and Tylka, 2011) In a study of overweight women, it was reported that while there was no significant decrease in waist circumference and BMI in the intuitive eating group, an energy-restricted diet was more effective (Anglin, 2012).

The relationships between intuitive eating and eating behaviours disorders

Individuals who have intuitive eating ability less tend to behaviour that causes weight than individuals who haven't intuitive eating ability. Researchers have shown that the intuitive eating score is negatively associations with binge eating, emotional eating, external eating and eating disorder symptoms (Ruzanska and Warschburger, 2017). As a result of a study that include 1134 participants, the majority of which is women (81.3%), it has determined that women with eating disorders diagnosis (anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, or binge eating disorder) have significantly lower all intuitive eating subscale scores and total scores than women who are not diagnosed with eating disorders (Van Dyck *et al.*, 2016). A recent study has reported that participants who experienced increases in feeling bored and eating because of boredom less intuitive eating and increases in snacking since the COVID 19 pandemic (Jackson *et al.*, 2021). Researcher have found that intuitive eating longitudinally predicted lower odds of high depressive symptoms, low self-esteem, high body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating behaviors in a diverse community sample (Hazzard *et al.*, 2021). In one study parents who manage their own hunger and satiety cues are more incline to report being attentive to their infant's hunger and satiety cues. That shows parents can effect a child's innate ability to self-regulate food intake (Khalsa *et al.*, 2019). Women postpartum who have intuitive eating styles, are more likely to have higher body image satisfaction, less disordered eating attitudes and lower depressive symptomology (Lee *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, after



involvement guided by the ten basic principles of intuitive eating for 10-week women participating in the program, moved away from dieting mentality at the end of the program. Thus, intuitive eating training can be helpful for treatment of patients with the disorder binge eating (Cole and Horacek, 2010).

The relationship between intuitive eating and some biochemical parameters

It has been shown that there are improvements in cholesterol, triglyceride and systolic blood pressure in individuals with intuitive eating behaviours (Bacon *et al.*, 2002). Participants in the intuitive eating program reported significant improvements in total cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL) levels two years after completing the program (Hawley *et al.*, 2008). Quansah *et al.* (2019) has indicated association between lower weight, BMI and fasting plasma glucose in pregnant women with gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM). They suggest that intuitive eating can be beneficial for weight and glucose management during and after pregnancy in women with GDM (Quansah *et al.*, 2019). Some researchers have showed that eating intuitively, may be associated with a lower chances of inadequate glycemic control, as assessed by HbA1c levels in adults and the elderly with type 2 diabetes mellitus (Soares *et al.*, 2021).

Conclusion

Intuitive eating is a style of eating that promotes a positive relationship with the body, food, food related behaviors and physical activity. Integrating intuitive eating approaches into clinical practice may help promote psychological well-being reduce frequency of overeating or binge eating. Intuitive eating-based interventions alone may offer a more holistic and long-term treatment approach than other traditional body weight management strategies. New treatment strategies that will be developed by using intuitive eating and eating awareness approaches together with other traditional methods in the treatment of body weight management and eating disorders will be promising, but more comprehensive studies are needed on this subject.

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