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Big decisions `best made on full tummy`



London, June 06: Considering a key move? Take a call only after having a good meal, for a study has revealed that big decisions are best made on a full stomach.

Researchers at Cambridge University have found that food raises the levels of serotonin in brain and people with higher concentration of the hormone are more likely to take a successful decision than those on an empty tummy.

Serotonin is produced in the body from Tryptophan, an amino acid present in foods like chocolate, red meat, seeds, nuts, bananas and curd.

On the contrary, skipping meals lowers levels of the brain chemical which keeps careless and impulsive behaviour in check. As a result, our hearts may overrule our heads, leading to bad decisions being made, according to the researchers.

"Our results suggest that serotonin plays a critical role in social decision making by normally keeping aggressive social responses in check. "changes in diet and stress cause our serotonin levels to fluctuate naturally, so it is important to understand how this might affect our everyday decision making," the British media quoted lead researcher Molly Crockett as saying.

The team came to the conclusion after analysing 20 volunteers. They cut the serotonin levels in the participants for a short time by manipulating their diets.

Subsequently, the researchers compared the behaviour of the volunteers following the brain chemical depletion to the behaviour following a placebo treatment, when playing a popular indoor game.

In the game, one player offers the other a share of some money. If the offer is accepted, both players are paid their split. If rejected, neither player gets anything.

The study showed that normally the participants tend to reject about half of all offers less than 20 to 30 percent of the total stake, despite the fact that this means they get nothing actually.

But when serotonin levels were low -- something that occurs when people are on an empty stomach -- the number of low offers turned down rose to more than 80 percent.

In other words, lack of serotonin increased the likelihood of the player making an unfair offer effectively being told where he could put his money, according to the Cambridge team.

The results of the study have been published in the latest edition of the `science` journal.

Bureau Report

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