

# Assess Disordered Eating Using the Yale Food Addiction Scale

Food addiction, much like other addictions, is defined by taking a substance or doing a behavior, experiencing negative consequences, and continuing that behavior in spite of the negative consequences, and there's a biological component to it. In the same way, like other addictions, food addiction is also a spiritual disease where people turn to food instead of turning to God. Understanding the nature of a person's struggle with disordered eating and helping them identify their condition is the first step for them to find suitable treatment. Following is an abbreviated version of the Yale Food Addiction Scale (YFAS) designed by Gearhardt, Corbin and Brownwell, 2009, to assess for signs of addictive behavior with food.

## Yale Food Addiction Scale\*

People sometimes have difficulty controlling their intake of certain foods such as sweets, starches, salty snacks, fatty foods, sugary drinks, and others. Have your client rate their eating habits in the past year using the following key:

**0:** *Never*    **1:** *Once per month*    **2:** *2-4 times per month*    **3:** *2-3 times per week*    **4:** *4+ times per week*

Question	Rating
1. I find myself consuming certain foods even though I am no longer hungry.	
2. I worry about cutting down on certain foods.	
3. I feel sluggish or fatigued from overeating.	
4. I have spent time dealing with negative feelings from overeating certain foods, instead of spending time in important activities such as time with family, friends, work, or recreation.	
5. I have had physical withdrawal symptoms such as agitation and anxiety when I cut down on certain foods. (DO NOT include caffeinated drinks: coffee, tea, cola, energy drinks, etc.)	
6. My behavior with respect to food and eating causes me significant distress.	
7. Issues related to food and eating decrease my ability to function effectively (daily routine, job/school, social or family activities, health difficulties).	

8. In the past 12 months, I kept consuming the same types or amounts of food despite significant emotional and/or physical problems related to my eating.	YES/NO
9. In the past 12 months, eating the same amount of food does not reduce negative emotions or increase pleasurable feelings the way it used to.	YES/NO

## Answer Key:

The number(s) listed for each question is the threshold necessary to meet that symptom. Put a checkmark next to each question in which the person met the threshold for that symptom.

1. 4 \_\_\_\_\_
2. 4 \_\_\_\_\_
3. 3 or 4 \_\_\_\_\_
4. 3 or 4 \_\_\_\_\_
5. 3 or 4 \_\_\_\_\_
6. 3 or 4 \_\_\_\_\_
7. 3 or 4 \_\_\_\_\_
8. YES \_\_\_\_\_
9. YES \_\_\_\_\_

To meet the food addiction threshold, the person said “YES” to either question 8 or 9 **and** meets the threshold for 3 or more of questions 1-7.

If after taking this assessment your client shows signs of addictive behavior with food, it is important that they find suitable treatment. According to the National Institute of Health, treatment plans can include and combine various approaches such as psychotherapy, nutrition and medical care. The treatment goal would be to stop unhealthy eating behaviors, restore nutrition and learn new ways of relating to food and eating both physically and spiritually.

\* The full Yale Food Addiction Scale can be found on the website Fast Lab, Food and Addiction Science & Treatment Lab: <https://fastlab.psych.lsa.umich.edu/yale-food-addiction-scale/>