Food Addiction Scale Tips

Practical insights for using a food assessment tool

Food addiction (FA), also referred to as food dependence, has been used in combination with specific eating behaviours to describe an abnormal pattern of excessive consumption.

What is the YFAS?

The Yale Food Addiction Scale (YFAS) is a measure that has been developed to identify those who are most likely to be exhibiting substance dependence with the consumption of high fat/high sugar foods.
The YFAS is a useful tool for identifying eating patterns and behaviours that are related to food addiction.

What does the YFAS measure?

The YFAS translates the diagnostic criteria for substance dependence as stated in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition (DSM-IV), to relate to the consumption of calorie-dense foods. These include tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, larger amounts consumed than intended, persistent desire or unsuccessful attempts to cut down, much time spent using or recovering from substance, continual use despite knowledge of consequences, and activities given up due to use of substance.

How do you score the YFAS?

The YFAS comprises a **25-item self-reported measure** that measures food dependence by tallying:

1. Symptom count: seven food dependence symptoms that reflects the number of addiction-like criteria from the DSM-IV (scored from 0 to 7)

2. Two items assessing clinically significant impairment or distress from eating

Food dependence can be diagnosed when three symptoms and clinically significant impairment or distress are present.

A positive YFAS diagnosis is usually positively associated with elevated body mass index, binge eating, and weight cycling.

How has YFAS been used?

The YFAS has been tested in non-clinical populations, binge eating populations, bariatric surgery patients, and diverse clinical groups.

The **Yale Food Addiction Scale 2.0** (YFAS 2.0) has been updated to measure food dependence according to the DSM-5 (5th edition) criteria for substance-related and addictive disorders. The new version was developed to maintain consistency with the current diagnostic understanding of addiction and to improve the psychometric properties of the original YFAS. Other versions of the YFAS are also available.

Who can I use the YFAS with?

The YFAS can be administered to participants ages 17+.

How do I use the YFAS?

You can use the YFAS to evaluate the severity and frequency with which your patients experience symptoms of dependence in relation to their food consumption.

You can access a free version here:
https://www.midss.org/sites/default/files/yale_food_addiction_scale.pdf

The YFAS should take 10 minutes to complete.

References

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