

Eating Behaviour in Prader-Willi Syndrome

Excessive eating, known medically as hyperphagia, is a significant feature of Prader-Willi syndrome

Between the ages of two and six years old, individuals with Prader-Willi syndrome exhibit an increase in eating behaviour, with primary consequences of overeating being obesity and behavioural difficulties.

Individuals with Prader-Willi syndrome are at higher risk of obesity due to overeating and difficulties with physical exercise as a result of poor muscle tone. They are also at higher risk of other [health problems](#) associated with obesity such as diabetes and coronary artery disease.

Research has shown that individuals with Prader-Willi syndrome have an impairment in satiety compared to control groups. This means that they rarely feel full, or feel full for less time than typically developing individuals. Tony Holland from the University of Cambridge discusses this topic in more detail [here](#).

It is apparent that impairment of satiety is underpinned by a complex interaction between numerous factors. The mechanism still needs further research to be fully understood.

People with Prader-Willi syndrome may show obsessions associated with food. These obsessions are linked to [challenging behaviour](#) and individuals may conceal information, take and hoard items because they are so motivated to access food.

Research has shown that individuals with Prader-Willi syndrome are significantly more preoccupied with food than a comparison group of individuals without Prader-Willi syndrome.

The video clip below shows how preoccupations with food may interfere with tasks and daily activities.

The [genetic subtype](#) of Prader-Willi syndrome can influence an individual's eating behaviour. Research has shown that individuals with a genetic deletion may be more likely to overeat than those with a uniparental disomy subtype of Prader-Willi syndrome. Therefore, those with a deletion subtype may have more impaired appetite regulation

than those with UPD subtype that may in turn result in more food seeking behaviours.

For support and advice on weight management in Prader-Willi syndrome, [click here](#).