

## Desperate for a chocolate biscuit? There's an app for that

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### Beating comfort eating with help from your mobile

A free app for iPhone, which is designed to help people tackle the habit of comfort eating and reduce the amount of high fat, high salt and high sugar snack food they consume, is being launched today (November 2) by the University of Birmingham.

The app, called the *Comfort Eater Beater*, has been produced with expert input from Dr Jacqueline Blissett, from the University's School of Psychology, as part of a project that received funding from UnLtd, the foundation for social entrepreneurs, in partnership with 4iP, an initiative of Channel 4 Television Corporation. It is the first smartphone app to help people to tackle comfort eating.

The light-hearted, easy-to-use app is on hand for when the urge to snack strikes, enabling people to identify when and why they are comfort eating, and then providing solutions to help them to deal with their mood without using food. It also links with social media to create a virtual network of support to further encourage people to overcome their habit.

Being depressed and boredom are the most frequently cited emotional triggers for eating, but other triggers include feeling irritated, upset, lonely, disappointed, worried, anxious or tense. The eating habits of people who are overweight are more influenced by emotional triggers than those of people of a healthy weight ('knowledge and attitudes towards healthy eating and activity', May 2011 report, National Obesity Observatory).

Dr Blissett, psychologist and consultant on the app, said: *'So many people turn to eating when they are stressed, bored or anxious. All those extra calories can add up. We've designed this app to get people thinking about how they are using food to deal with their emotions, and to try to suggest simple alternatives that may get people through those moments when a chocolate biscuit seems irresistible.'*

The app is not intended for people with a clinical eating problem, severe depression or extreme moods, who should seek help from a medical professional. It is designed to help the average person to make small changes towards a healthier diet.



Comfort Eater Beater app

### Notes to Editors

1. The app is now available in iTunes.
2. It is produced by developers Geocast.tv and facilitated by Ideas Lab at the University of Birmingham.
3. Dr Jacqueline Blissett is available for interview. Please contact the press office to arrange.
4. Images of the Comfort Eater Beater app are available. Please contact the press office to request.

### For further information

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