

Could beef jerky trigger manic episodes for some people?

There is no singular cause of mental illness. Any number of things—our genes, environment, and even [social mores](#)—play a role in determining whether someone’s mental health will deteriorate to the point of being diagnosable as a disease. But researchers from Johns Hopkins have stumbled onto a possible trigger for manic episodes they didn’t expect to find: beef jerky.

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[A] strange pattern began popping up among people diagnosed with mania, a state of hyper excitement, arousal, and delusion frequently followed by periods of severe depression in people who have bipolar disorder. Compared to the control group, people with a manic episode reported eating more cured meats such as beef jerky. Overall, they found that people with a recent history of eating cured meat were three times more likely to be hospitalized for mania, even after adjusting for factors like age or socioeconomic status. The same pattern couldn’t be seen with any other type of food eaten.

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As for how jerky could be triggering mania, [researcher Robert] Yolken suspects it involves the microbial environment, or microbiome, of the gut. In a healthy person, the gut and brain regularly “talk” to one another through hormonal and nerve signals to keep the body regulated, the so-called gut-brain axis.

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Even if diet plays a role in mental illness risk, it’s only one of many factors that interact in complicated ways we don’t fully understand.

Read full, original post: [Eating Beef Jerky Might Be Linked to Manic Episodes in Some People](#)