**PRESSURED PILE ON POUNDS**

**Stressed out people are more likely to become fat by comfort eating, finds study**

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23rd February 2017, 5:00 am

Researchers found those with a high level of a particular stress hormone were more likely to be overweight

**STRESSED people are more likely to comfort eat and therefore be fatter, a study has found.**

Hair was tested for levels of stress hormone cortisol, which helps the body decide how to use energy and store fat.

Researchers at University College London took 2cm of hair from 2,527 people over four years.

Those with more cortisol tended to be heavier with larger waists and a higher body mass index.

Previous studies looking at the link between the stress hormone and obesity relied mainly on measurements of blood, saliva or urine.

Those who were found with higher levels of the stress hormone tended to have larger waists and BMI

But these may vary according to the time of day and other situational factors, which means they fail to capture long-term cortisol levels.

Experts say anxious or worried people are more likely to comfort eat.

And these foods – often high in fat, sugar, and calories – can lead to weight gain around the waist.

Study leader Dr Sarah Jackson said: “These results provide consistent evidence that chronic stress is associated with higher levels of obesity.

If further research finds high cortisol levels cause obesity, it may offer a new method for treating the condition.