



A lifestyle approach to improving mood and wellbeing

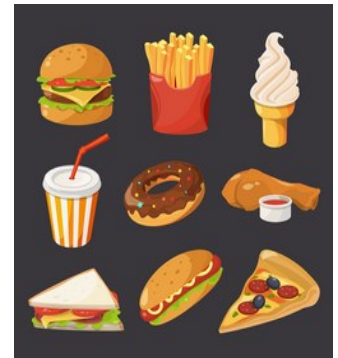
"LET THY FOOD BE THY MEDICINE AND THY MEDICINE BE THY FOOD."

HIPPOCRATES

Why We Crave Certain Foods: Understanding What Drives Snacking

Cravings are frequent, specific, intense desires to eat a particular type of food. Cravings often involve ultra-processed, salty, sweet, or crunchy snacks. According to Erin Morse, chief clinical dietitian at UCLA Health, cravings are not about hunger. She explains, "Hunger is the need for food for fuel, for nutrition, for all the good things that our bodies and our brains need." In contrast, with cravings, "Our bodies are telling us that we **want** something to eat."

People might experience food cravings seemingly out of nowhere, or they may be related to seeing, smelling, or hearing about a specific food. For example, seeing an advertisement for French fries could trigger a craving for them. But because cravings are about what we want to eat and not what our bodies need to eat to function optimally, we are at risk of eating too many calories and becoming under-nourished. This is because unhealthy food items that we may come to crave often have little or no nutritive value. So why do we crave them? Continue reading to find out more about the causes of food cravings and for some tips on how to reduce them.



Common Triggers for Cravings:

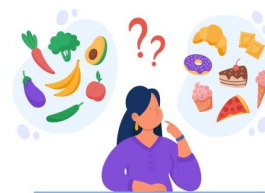
The brain regions responsible for memory, pleasure and reward play a role in cravings, as do hormonal fluctuations, emotions, and even hunger (though they are not the same as hunger). Seeing an advertisement for particular food items, stress or "comfort eating", menstruation or pregnancy, and even waiting too long between or skipping meals can all trigger cravings. Additional triggers may include:

1. **External cues**, like watching a favorite TV show that you have a habit of watching while eating ice cream. You'll become conditioned to reach for that bowl of ice cream when you watch an episode,
2. **Internal cues**, such as sadness, can prompt people to crave certain foods too.
3. **Deprivation**. If you're restricting food or dieting, you may find yourself craving certain foods by the end of the day. .
4. **Poor sleep**. "Studies show that lack of sleep can increase appetite and increase cravings," .
5. **Social environment**. Think of the workplace vending machine or your partner who is constantly baking treats. "They're seeing it all the time; they want it all the time,"

Sources for this newsletter: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/318441#replacing-cravings><https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/318441#replacing-cravings>

Tips For Reducing Food Cravings

1. Being dehydrated can make you feel hungry or increase food cravings.
2. Get enough sleep. Not getting enough sleep (at least 7 hours) can contribute to increased hunger and cravings.
3. Eat enough protein. It will help you feel satisfied longer and reduce craving.
4. Snack smart.
5. Remove triggers.



Healthy Snack Ideas for Every Kind of Food Craving

1. Instead of chips, try 1/4 cup of lightly salted nuts.
2. Instead of milk chocolate, choose antioxidant-rich dark chocolate with 70% cocoa or more.
3. Instead of pastries or candies, switch to fresh or dried fruit.
4. Instead of soda, try seltzer water with a squeeze of fruit juice or a slice of fresh orange, lemon, lime or sprig of mint.
5. Instead of full-fat cheese, switch to low-fat cheese. And remember, always in moderation.

The Food and Thought Program works to promote awareness and provide short term counselling around the important link between nutrition and emotional health. For more information or for a referral to the program, please contact the Food and Thought Program at 781-599-0110.

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