

Food Cravings: Don't Let Them Control You!



It happens to all of us. You're not really hungry, yet you feel like eating those not so healthy foods—ice-cream, chocolate, pizza or chips. While these foods may not hurt you when eaten in small amounts, over-consumption of them can wreck your health goals. What is it about certain foods that draw us in and make us feel helpless to resist them?

The answer is that sugar, chocolate, cheese, meat and certain other foods stimulate your brain in the same areas that alcohol and drugs do, giving them addictive qualities. The good news is that your body can help you overcome the yearning for the foods you love that don't love you back. The six steps below will help you build physical resilience against cravings:

1. Plan your breakfast to block cravings later in the day.

Whatever you do, don't skip breakfast! Having a healthy breakfast curbs your appetite. The key to a good breakfast is including enough fiber. It's what makes food filling without being fattening. A bowl of old-fashioned oatmeal or rye toast, along with some fresh fruit, will power you throughout the morning. Bran cereal is also an excellent choice.

2. Choose foods that hold your blood sugar steady.

Keep the fiber party going! Choose high-fiber foods with a low glycemic index (GI). Foods with a low GI release sugars slowly, keep your energy level steady and won't cause your blood sugar to spike. [Click here to learn more about the glycemic index and how it may help you.](#)

3. Boost your appetite-taming hormone, leptin.

You really don't need a diet pill. It's quite likely, though, that the leptin in your bloodstream needs a tune-up. The cycle of dieting, then bingeing can make your appetite go haywire. Exercise and eating plenty of low-fat foods will give you higher leptin levels!

4. Learn to break the cycle of cravings.

OK—this is not about willpower. It's really all about timing and biology. Whether your cravings are daily, monthly or at certain seasons, you can fight them by planning for competing activities when your cravings hit you (call a friend or go for a walk, etc.). Try to break up your schedule, at least temporarily, so you're not stuck in the same rut that increases your cravings.


5. Restore your natural 24-hour rhythm.

Exercise is not just for burning calories. It's also like a giant reset button for your body. A good workout blocks appetite swings, boosts your mood and helps you to sleep better, all of which strengthen your power over cravings and puts you in a different relationship with your body. Start slow and see your doctor before beginning any new exercise program—then go for it! Forgive us if we mention this a lot, but getting enough sleep is another essential component to your overall health and will give you more power to control cravings. Sleeping is not a waste of time.

6. Use extra motivators when you need to.

What really matters to you? Losing weight? Getting healthier? If you're looking for some extra motivation, see which of the following mean the most to you. By breaking free from unhealthy eating habits you'll:

- a. Slim down.
- b. Help to prevent heart disease and diabetes
- c. Have more energy
- d. Discover new and interesting foods
- e. Motivate your friends and family to get healthier

(Article excerpted from *Breaking the Food Seduction* by Dr. Neal D. Barnard) 

Power Up Your Emotional Health

Do you monitor your emotional well-being and take action when you hit a rough patch? Let's be honest, most of us don't. What makes this a surprising truth as well as an inconvenient one is that our psychological health impacts our quality of life as much as our physical health does (some might argue even more). However, when it comes to getting attention and care, our psychological health has a lot of catching up to do. A great way to start closing the gap is to adopt the habit of "treating" common psychological "injuries" when you sustain them. Here's how:

1. Protect Your Self Esteem. Self-esteem is the armor we wear to the "battle of life," and yet when it is low, we often become self-critical and injure it even further. Whenever self-critical thoughts pop into your head, consider what you would say to a close friend who expressed similar feelings. Then address those exact thoughts to yourself. Practicing self-compassion and allowing your self-esteem to recover will give a big boost to your overall mental health.

2. Distract Yourself From Brooding Thoughts. Stewing over upsetting events only makes us feel worse, as brooding is surprisingly damaging to our mental health. When you find yourself stuck in a cycle of brooding and stewing, disrupt the urge to brood by developing a zero tolerance attitude toward it.

3. Find Meaning After a Loss. Loss is a natural part of life and something none of us can avoid. Regardless of how painful or traumatic the loss, one aspect has been found to be extremely important for emotional recovery—our ability to find meaning in the events. Once you've begun to heal, think about possible ways in which you might derive some good from the situation.

(article courtesy of Guy Winch, Ph.D.)



RECIPE CHOPPED SALAD WITH AVOCADO DRESSING

Sweet romaine, grape tomatoes, pinto beans and crunchy corn chips come together in just 10 minutes in this lively and satisfying salad.



Ingredients

- 2 cups chopped romaine lettuce
- 1 15 oz. can pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup grape tomatoes, chopped
- ½ cup fresh or frozen corn kernels
- 4 Tbs. chopped green onions
- 4 Tbs. chopped cilantro
- 1 ripe avocado
- 6 Tbs. Salsa
- ½ cup low-fat sour cream
- 3 Tbs. lime juice
- Tabasco sauce to taste
- Baked tortilla chips to taste

Directions

1. Combine lettuce, beans, tomatoes and corn. Sprinkle cilantro and onions on top.
2. Mash avocado in separate bowl and whisk in sour cream, salsa and Tabasco sauce. Pour dressing over salad, toss well and top with corn chips.

Nutritional information per serving (makes 4 servings) calories: 330 | 8 g protein
32 g carbohydrates | 293 mg sodium | 10 g fiber | 6 g sugar

(recipe courtesy of vegetarianimes.com)