



The Food- Mood Connection

There are many possible reasons why you have food cravings

- **Missed Meals or snacks** If you don't eat enough food throughout the day, you can create a feeling of intense hunger. Make sure to have 3 healthy balanced meals a day with healthy snacks in between.
- **Eliminating foods from your diet.** Avoiding your favourite foods for long periods of time can make you crave it so much that you may end up over-indulging in it. Avoid "all or none" thinking and allow yourself occasional indulgences.
- **Lack of healthy snacks available.** Just knowing the chocolate or potato chips are nearby can make you want them more. "Out of sight, out of mind" is often the best strategy. Manage your environment and keep your fridge and cupboards stocked with easy and healthy snack options, like a handful of trail mix, fresh fruit with some cheese, yogurt or a glass of milk or raw vegetables and hummus.
- **Emotional eater?** Have you ever craved a treat because you had a crummy day? Eating carbohydrate-rich foods like grains, starches and sweets can increase serotonin production and help you to feeling calm and relaxed. This comes back to having healthy snacks available. Fill up mostly on healthy carbohydrates like fresh fruits, vegetables, popcorn or even a hot cup of tea can do the trick.

What can I do to control my cravings?

1. Find out why you're hungry. Are you eating in response to an emotion such as anger or frustration? If so, try to remember that eating likely won't fill the "hunger" void you're feeling. Instead, try listening to your favourite feel-good song, calling an old friend or getting some physical activity or fresh air.
2. If it is true hunger, ask yourself why. Did you miss a meal? Is it time for a healthy snack? Try to eat something nutritious first and then reevaluate whether your body really needs what you were originally craving.
3. If you can identify exactly what you are craving (think about whether you want sweet, salty, crunchy, creamy, savoury, hot or cold), it may be best to just have a small amount of it and enjoy it instead of filling up on other foods and still not feeling satisfied.
4. Pour yourself a glass of water or herbal tea first. This may reduce the craving, since sometimes we mistake thirst for hunger.
5. Allow yourself to indulge in a craving once in a while without feeling guilty. There's nothing wrong with the occasional treat – all foods can fit. At the same time, make it harder to get at your favourite treats by managing your environment and not stocking your house or workplace with foods you're likely to overeat. This will help set you up for success.
6. Comfort yourself without food. Try going for a walk, taking a bath, getting some fresh air, reading a book, doing a hobby or calling a friend. Keeping physically active is one of the best ways to lessen cravings and boost your mood.