

Control Your Cravings *Guide*

TOP TIPS TO CUT CRAVINGS
AND REGAIN CONTROL OF
WHAT YOU EAT



YOUR
Functional Health

CRAVINGS 101

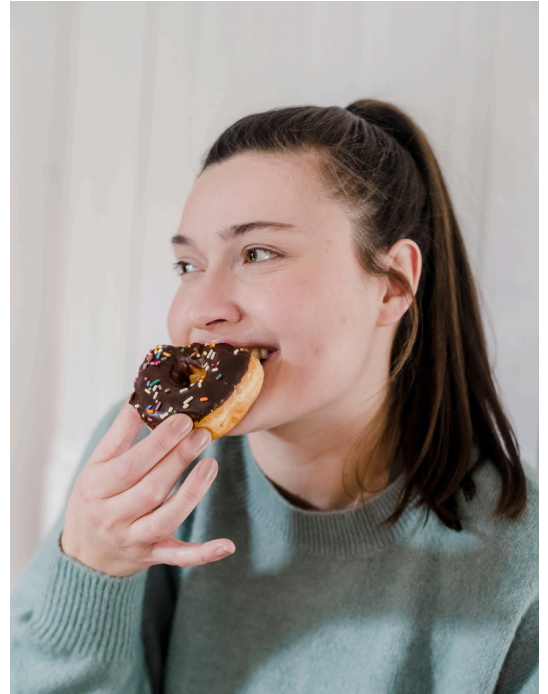
What are they?

Whether it's for ice cream, potato chips, or pizza, most of us battle cravings from time to time. They're those irresistible urges we get for certain foods.

But cravings are NOT the same as hunger.

Hunger is a physical signal that your body is running low on energy or nutrients.

Cravings, on the other hand, often have little to do with actual hunger. Instead, your brain's pleasure and reward system are at the root of cravings.



Sweet, fatty, or salty foods boost the pleasure hormone dopamine -- the very same hormone that cocaine and gambling activate.

So if cravings ever feel like an addiction to you... there's a good reason for that! Cravings can also be triggered by emotions or physical imbalances.

Common Causes of Cravings

- Stress or anxiety
- Uncomfortable emotions like anger or sadness
- Hormonal imbalances
- Dehydration
- Nutrient deficiencies
- Lack of sleep
- Low blood sugar

If left unchecked, cravings can lead to unhealthy food choices and weight gain. But they can also trigger a vicious cycle of shame and guilt.

While cravings are intense, there are ways to manage them and regain control of what you eat.

Read on for simple tips and tools to help you combat cravings.

HUNGER VS. CRAVINGS

What's the difference?

Cravings are often fueled by emotions. So step one to fighting cravings is to **know the difference between physical hunger and emotional hunger** (aka emotional eating).

Here are some ways to tell them apart:

Physical Hunger

- Signal from your brain that you're low on energy
- Comes on gradually
- Usually happens 2-3 hours after eating something satisfying
- Stomach may feel empty, or may notice growling sounds
- Food desires are less specific
- Stops when you're full

Emotional Hunger

- Stems from the onset of an emotion like stress, anxiety, sadness, etc.
- Comes on suddenly and is usually intense
- Occurs regardless of the last time you ate
- Food desires are for specific comfort foods
- Isn't satisfied with a full stomach

Once you've established you're having a craving, and *not* true hunger, ask yourself, "What emotions am I feeling?"

Whether it's anger, worry, or loneliness, see if you can think of a healthier way to respond to that emotion.

Go for a walk, write in your journal, call a friend, or listen to your favorite song. The more you find healthy ways to cope with your emotions, the less prone you'll be to stress eating.



HOW TO CUT CRAVINGS

Top Tips



Drink some water

Thirst is often mistaken for hunger. So when a craving hits, drink a tall glass of water *before* you reach for those snacks. If you still feel hungry 20 minutes later, eat a small, healthy snack with some protein like some Greek yogurt with berries.



Meal prep

Setting aside an hour or two for meal prep is a simple way to stave off cravings. When there's plenty of healthy food at your fingertips, it's much easier to resist those urges for junk. If you're new to meal prep, check out [this article](#).



Eat a variety of foods

When you eat the same foods on repeat, it can lead to nutritional deficiencies, and in turn, cravings. That's because different foods have different nutrient profiles. One easy way to avoid this is to eat a healthy diet with a diverse range of foods.



Don't let yourself get hungry

Eating at consistent intervals prevents those nasty blood sugar crashes that can cause cravings. To keep cravings at bay, aim to eat every 3-4 hours. And keep healthy snacks on hand so that vending machine isn't so tempting.

TIPS TO CUT CRAVINGS

Continued....



Distract yourself

Often changing the scenery can help cravings die down. When a craving strikes, try distracting yourself for 20 minutes. Read a book, play with a pet, garden, or do a quick workout. Most cravings will subside if you can just wait them out.



Avoid your triggers

It's much easier to cave into cravings when cookies and chips are always on hand. Consider giving your kitchen a makeover to clear out any unhealthy foods. And if you feel pulled to swing by a certain drive-through on your way home from work, take a new route.



Eat more protein

Research shows upping your protein intake can reduce cravings and late night snacking. That's because protein stabilizes your blood sugar and helps you feel satisfied longer. For a list of high protein foods, check out [this post](#).



Manage stress

Stress increases cortisol, which can ramp up cravings for sugary and fatty foods. So to cut cravings, keeping your stress in check is key. Exercise, meditation, deep breathing, and spending time in nature are all proven stress-busters.

TIPS TO CUT CRAVINGS

Continued....



Get enough sleep

Lack of sleep increases the hunger hormone ghrelin and decreases leptin, the hormone that helps you feel full. The result? More cravings, especially for fatty and sweet foods. To prevent this, aim to get at 7-8 hours of sleep every night.



Pick a healthier alternative

If you drink a glass of water and try distracting yourself, but a craving just won't budge, consider a healthier alternative. Chocolate cravings? Have a few squares of dark chocolate. Craving something salty? Snack on a handful of salted cashews.



Bump up fiber

Fiber slows down digestion, stabilizes your blood sugar, and helps you feel full -- which may help combat cravings. Be sure to eat plenty of fiber-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, beans, lentils, whole grains, chia seeds, and flaxseed.



Chew some gum

Believe it or not, chewing gum may help cut your cravings. Research suggests chewing gum may reduce hunger and cravings and help you feel full longer. Just opt for healthy gum options, like those sweetened with xylitol.