

CRUSH YOUR
cravings

WITH NUTRITION
NURSE



Are cravings ruining your life?



Do you sometimes feel you're being driven by an invisible force – usually in the direction of the fridge or treats cupboard? And you know you definitely would be able to stick to your diet if you didn't get the irrepressible urge for something sweet...

If you can't seem to get through the day without coffee, chocolate, sugar, or processed 'treat' foods, every day can feel like a bit of a hamster wheel. If you want to step off – and to crush your cravings for good – you need to address the physical, emotional, habitual and psychological aspects that lead to cravings. If it sounds hard work, it isn't really. Once you understand roughly how food works in the body, you will be able to stop the physical need for treats, and you can start looking at creating healthier habits around treat foods.

Why can't I stop craving foods?



Physiologically, your body needs a steady flow of energy throughout the day. When you eat too many foods that turn quickly into sugar (whether it's sugar or starchy carbohydrates), this creates a blood sugar spike. The body then produces insulin to take the excess sugar out of your blood, and stores it as fat. Sometimes too much of this sugar is packed away, which leads to blood sugar levels dropping too quickly, resulting in tiredness, low mood, a drop in concentration – and cravings.

The cravings are nearly always for sugary foods or starchy carbs; anything the body can quickly convert to sugar to get blood sugar levels up again. Eating continually in this way causes a blood sugar rollercoaster, leaving you frequently exhausted, moody, irritable, sensitive to stress, prone to weight gain, and unable to concentrate.

Where do I start?

Balancing your blood sugar is the first step.

Switching to a low-GL (glycaemic load) diet based on whole foods like meat, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts, seeds, beans and pulses, vegetables and fruit, with smaller amounts of wholegrain starches like brown rice and wholemeal bread will help enormously. These foods ensure that your body gets a steady, small supply of glucose to fuel your cells. The result? No blood sugar spikes and crashes. Simply, you feel more energised and on a more even keel.



Along with incorporating these foods into your diet, follow these simple rules:

- 1.** Aim to eat three meals a day and no snacks in between, and all food in at least a 12 hour window (which means waiting 12 hours from your dinner one evening to your breakfast the next morning). This gives your body the chance to process the things you are eating and rest in between, which is important.
- 2.** Eat protein with every meal (meat, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts, seeds, beans and pulses). The protein slows down the speed at which sugars get broken down, stopping a blood sugar spike.



3. Fill up on non-starchy veg – focus on eating the sort that grow above the ground, such as leafy greens like spinach and kale, salad leaves, broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, garden peas, aubergine, courgette, asparagus, cabbage, peppers, and squash.

4. Eat fewer starchy carbs and switch those you do eat to brown or wholemeal varieties, like wholemeal bread, brown rice, wholemeal pasta and opting for quinoa over cous cous.

That might seem miles away from where you feel you are right now, and that's not unusual. When you work on your diet as a whole, your cravings and energy levels will come back into line if you focus on eating real food, always having a source of protein and plenty of veg, and scaling back starchy carbs.

While your energy levels rebalance themselves, it can be helpful to have a small, snack to keep your blood sugar levels balanced.

Snacking vs satisfying cravings

Snacking is not the same as eating to stop a craving – healthy, low-GL snacks help prevent cravings, especially in the early days of changing your diet.

Snacks prevent and alleviate true hunger, while cravings alleviate withdrawal symptoms. A tell-tale sign of a craving is that you feel a nearly uncontrollable need to eat a specific food. You HAVE to have it.

Snacking, on the other hand, is a choice to consume a specific food at a set point in time, and the snack is usually interchangeable with other foods. As an example, you could eat an oatcake with hummus OR yoghurt and berries and feel equally satisfied with either choice. Cravings tend to be for specific foods - usually high carb foods. They can rage when your blood sugar levels are out of balance or if you have a particular emotional attachment to a food.



How to **break** habitual eating

Your habits follow a very predictable pattern. First, you experience a trigger – for example, the 3pm workday energy slump. Next, you act on that trigger – by reaching for the chocolate in your desk drawer. Lastly, you experience a reward, or have one of your needs met – in this case, you get an energy boost from the chocolate.

Trigger --> Action --> Reward/Need met

Ask yourself:

What are my triggers?

Are they emotional triggers?

Food triggers?

Triggers in certain places or situations?



Identifying what your triggers are helps you take control of them and change the outcome. What is it that you really need? Could something else – perhaps less tangible – make you feel good? What strategies can you put in place now to support yourself when you get triggered?

In the above example, the real underlying need was to improve energy, which eating a sugary chocolate would not achieve in the long-term. What was really needed may have been a nap, a short walk outdoors, or 5-10 minutes of relaxation time.

How to **break** habitual eating

After you've identified your triggers, it is important to:

Get rid of trigger foods

If you can't resist eating a whole box of biscuits or a whole packet of crisps in one sitting, don't have them in the house.

Plan, plan, plan

Eventually, your healthy eating will become second nature but until your new habits are firmly in place, you need to support yourself by planning what you will be eating in advance. Bad habits love you to rely on spontaneity.

Use displacement activities

If you are triggered or get a craving-related thought, do something else. That might be painting your nails, going for a walk, cleaning out the fridge, putting on some music, writing a letter, for example. Simply giving yourself a few moments may relieve the pressure and stop the chain reaction. Find activities that work for you. Write these down to reinforce them, and commit to doing them. This is the same kind of distraction technique you might have used to stop a toddler tantrum.

Practice makes perfect

Practise until your new habit feels completely normal, which it will! It takes at least 21 times of doing something to create a new habit. It feels weird at first and takes a lot of conscious effort. But eventually, your brain 'gets it' and you will do it without thinking.

Keep in mind the 3/6/36 rule

It takes:

3 weeks to break a habit.

6 weeks to create a new habit.

36 weeks for the new habit to become a default habit.

How to **curb** emotional eating

Emotional eating is a form of habitual eating. It happens when you get into the habit of regulating your emotions using food instead of finding other healthy outlets for them.

To gain victory over emotional eating, first ask yourself, what emotion has triggered my craving? Then, what do I really need instead when I reach for that biscuit/chocolate/pastry?

For example:

Stressed / anxious – take a walk, breathe deeply, talk to someone

Feeling deprived – give yourself a non-food reward

Depressed / sad – talk, ask for a hug

Bored / fidgety – do something that interests you

Angry / frustrated – talk it through, breathe!

Lonely – phone a friend, join a club, find an exercise group

Guilty – deal with the guilt directly



Be the CEO of your thoughts and actions

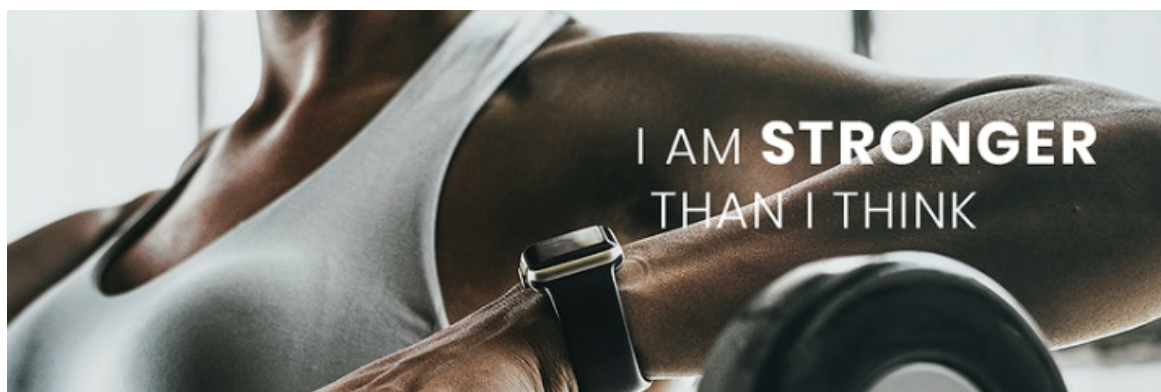
Remember, YOU are in control of what you think and how you react to life. You may not be able to control every aspect of your external environment but you can control how you think about and respond to that environment.

You are the CEO of your health, and CEOs don't take orders from a packet of biscuits. Choosing puts you back in control. The responsibility is yours. You are the one who puts food in your mouth and, even if it sometimes feels as though it is out of your control, it never is. When a craving-related thought enters your mind, be ready to respond with a more positive alternative.

For example, replace "I've been really good, I deserve a reward" with "being the right weight for me and in control is my best reward".

Developing short key phrases to help you make new choices is critical to your success. The more you use a phrase, the more it becomes a part of what you now do.

Develop phrases such as "I could eat it but I choose not to", "I actually don't want this" or "I am not hungry, so I will not eat for the moment". Creating a mental picture can also help. That means visualising yourself slamming a cupboard door on the unhealthy foods you are now choosing to avoid. Practise this until it becomes second nature.



Be kind to yourself



Ensuring you have a good self-care plan (which means taking time out regularly to do the things you love), which cut your reliance on treat foods to feel good. It is the magic pill you have been looking for.

Unless you are superhuman, there will be the odd time that you slip and have more than you should or eat something you later regret. Slim people overindulge too – but they don't beat themselves up about it. They just go back to eating normally.

Remember, the occasional slice of cake or a portion that is too big is not going to make you put on a few pounds but regular binges will. Plus, binges on sugary or salty food will make you retain water – making you look and feel heavier than you really are. It's just not worth it. If you have a slip you can still rescue the situation and stop it turning into a binge, sabotaging all your good work.

Say: "It's done. It's in the past and I choose to move on". Reaffirm your resolve to make a different choice next time.

Take action now!



I'd love to help you on your journey back to your best. Each month, I keep a small number of appointments for people who want to explore how a nutrition and lifestyle plan can help them get the breakthrough they are looking for in their health.

If this is what you need right now, THEN PLEASE BOOK YOUR COMPLIMENTARY 30 MIN CALL ON MY WEBSITE.

Take care!



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Regain your health and vitality