

Causes of Cravings

Do you ever wonder what causes your cravings? Why is it that sometimes you just must have those salty chips or maybe those sugary cookies? Next time you have a craving, stop and think what may be causing it.

What is a craving?

- A strong desire or urge for a specific food
- Often strikes quickly
- Can feel out of control and motivate a need for instant gratification
- Can lead to feelings like anxiety or anger if can't be satisfied
- A form of physical or emotional hunger

2 types of cravings...Physical and Emotional

Physical cravings can stem from biological imbalances and/or nutrient deficiencies such as...

1. **Dehydration** – our brain can confuse dehydration with being hungry. Drink 1-2 glasses of water in the morning and stay hydrated throughout the day. When a craving strikes, drink a glass of water and re-access how you feel.
2. **Lack of nutrients** - our body can crave after eating processed foods as your body isn't getting enough nutrients. Eat nourishing whole foods such as fruits, veggies, protein, healthy fats, and whole grains
3. **Extreme hunger** – when we restrict calories during the day, we crave more food at night. Eat 3 balanced meals a day and tune into your body's needs.
4. **Yin-yang imbalance** – when there is an overabundance of one, we tend to crave the opposite. If you eat too much salt, you may crave sugar and vice versa.
5. **Stagnant energy**- when we don't move enough, we may crave. Add daily physical activity. We often eat better when we exercise.
6. **Food history** – we can crave foods our ancestors ate or foods that were eaten when little. Try healthier versions if needed.
7. **Season** – we may crave cooling foods when hot, warming foods when cold. Be flexible and enjoy the foods of the season.
8. **Hormones** – cortisol increases during times of stress. Eat more fiber, limit caffeine and alcohol, move throughout the day, prioritize sleep, and practice self- care.



Emotional cravings can stem from a variety of factors...

1. **Emotions and stress** – we may use food in an attempt to control how we feel. Reduce stress where possible, identify your emotions and what you really need, see if you can connect specific emotions with specific cravings.
2. **Boredom** - we may turn to food for instant gratification. Create a list of non-eating activities for when boredom strikes, have projects you are working on.
3. **Healthy relationships, regular physical activity, a fulfilling career, and spiritual practice**- not feeling satisfied in these areas may cause cravings. Brainstorm what is lacking in those areas and think about ways you can feel more fulfilled.
4. **Rigid Lifestyle** - we can be addicted to healthy eating. trying to eliminate foods or depriving ourselves of foods can lead us to craving them. Adopt a flexible lifestyle.
5. **Self-Sabotage and Limiting Beliefs** - when we want to fit in socially or have fun and indulge in foods/drinks we normally wouldn't then feel guilty afterwards. Surround yourself with supportive people, practice self-empowerment by writing down strengthens/affirmations and post them where you can see them daily.
6. **Social and Cultural Differences** - the media has a huge impact on what is classified as healthy. Past experiences and foods from past can cause a craving. Also, sensory cues like wanting popcorn at the movie theater. Increase your awareness of influence, create your own eating rituals and tune into what your body needs.
7. **Reward and Food Addiction** - sometimes we crave/eat because we feel we deserve to be rewarded. We can become addicted to sugar because it raises our dopamine level (feel good hormone). Find other ways to reward yourself for a job well done.

For all your cravings, be sure to check in with your emotions first to explore if you are physically hungry or emotionally hungry. Emotional cravings can usually be satisfied through a primary food (relationship, physical activity, career, spirituality). Keeping a journal of how you feel when an emotional craving strikes is helpful in getting to the root cause and brainstorming ways to satisfy the craving through primary food vs mindless eating.

To work through your cravings, work with a DVACO Health Coach!

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/318441#How-to-reduce-food-cravings>

For more information on FREE Health Coaching please contact 610-225-6277