

Your **CONTROL CRAVINGS**



To Help Control
**Your Weight,
Your Energy,
& Your Wellness**

Presented by:
Michelle Dowker MSc, ND



Control Your Cravings

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Introduction

Do you find yourself always asking the question, “Why Am I So Hungry?” You are not alone in examining this question day in and day out.

Thousands of people wonder what is causing their feelings of hunger to increase and how to get their temptation for food under control. There is little doubt that all of these inexplicable cravings can contribute to excessive weight gain.

Imagine the impact you could have on the scale and your life if you were able to curb your cravings naturally? Controlling your appetite is not something that happens overnight. First, you have to understand what is happening within your body from a physiological standpoint and you must be ready to conduct a bit of self-reflection before you can push forward with the next steps.

Knowing what is causing your hunger pangs is essential to pinpoint the reasons for your cravings! I always say that **awareness is the first step towards positive change.**

The more you can become aware of the effects of food in your body, your emotions toward food, and how your food choices can affect your wellness, the better equipped you will be to be able to create better control over your food cravings.



Real Vs. Fake Hunger: Why Do I Think I Am Hungry?

Identifying real hunger from fake hunger can leave you questioning your sanity. Unfortunately, during the course of a day, there is a real chance that something else aside from real hunger may be triggering your latest craving.

Sometimes, the feeling of hunger may mask a whole other symptom that is happening within our bodies. The desire for food is often our body's way of requesting help with some other essential need or function within our body.

Identifying hunger requires one to consider a bevy of scenarios that might be causing you to feel hungry from medical conditions to your latest food choices, there are a vast number of reasons you might think you are hungry.

Some common reasons that can cause hunger and cravings include dysregulation of hormones like insulin, leptin, and ghrelin, the balance of bacteria in your intestines, the level of inflammation in your body, the quality and duration of your sleep, the level of stress your mind and body are enduring, your emotions, your food choices, and so much more!

In this book, we will discuss some of these common causes of food cravings, and some simple things you can do to control them.



A Modern Problem – Our Primitive Brain

Our inbuilt systems evolved to ensure the survival of our hunter-gatherer ancestors. Both taste receptors and chemical rewards were positively selected for those foods and food types that were beneficial to survival, but in extremely short supply.

However, in today's modern society, these same "foods" or chemicals that mimic them, are all too readily available.

Researchers work hard to create what is called the "**Bliss Point**" of foods: the optimal ratio of sugar, fat, and salt to stimulate neurotransmitter and hormone receptors, which leave you craving more. They purposefully create these addictive combinations so that you keep going back for more and more of their commercially prepared products they have for sale.

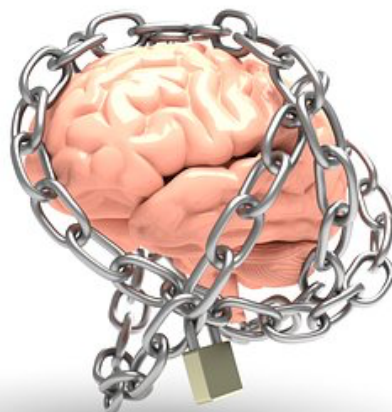
These foods cause the release of various chemicals in your brain that will make you feel good, such as dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, and endorphins.

The primitive part of our brain that is in charge of our survival mechanisms doesn't recognize that these foods are no longer in short supply, and still rewards us for ingesting them, regardless of quantity.

It can be easy to allow that primitive, but powerful, part of their brain to overrule the rational, thinking brain, and let it make food choices, unconsciously. Unfortunately, that part of our thinking is like an untrained child, basing its food choices on taste and feeling good.

You end up reaching for the comfort food that makes you feel good and soothes your emotions, but has very little to no nutrition. As a result, you can end up storing simple carbohydrates and fat as energy reserves that never get used, and you can end up gaining unwanted weight.

In addition, excess consumption of simple sugars and refined, ultra-processed foods will send your metabolic hormones in a tailspin, which will further negatively affect your hunger and cravings.



Nutrients vs. Calories

On a physiological level, cravings can be due to nutritional limitations of a particular diet - some foods don't allow you to get the nutrition, minerals, vitamins and healthy food components your body needs.

This is especially a problem with modern, packaged, ultra-processed foods. These foods are filled with what are called “**empty calories**”, meaning they are filled with large amounts of calories but devoid of important nutrients like vitamins and minerals.

These empty calories lead to a constant alarm bell sounding in your brain that tells you to eat, since you are not getting the nutrients you need. This feeling of hunger is an inbuilt survival response. Unfortunately, the mind/body response to acute hunger does not select for nutrient value, but selects for energy value.

The opposite to foods with empty calories are foods which are nutrient-dense. **Nutrient density** is the ratio of a food's energy content to its nutritional components. Foods high on the nutrient density scale means they **contain higher levels of nutrients compared to how many calories they contain.**

Nutrient dense foods are loaded with minerals, vitamins and other nutrients which help you maintain optimum physical, emotional and mental wellness. Furthermore, they're low in added sugars.

The most basic understanding you will need regarding nutrient-dense foods is they are all natural and whole foods. Humans have yet to replicate the nutrient density that mother nature provides, so the most nutrient-dense foods in the world are all whole, natural foods.

Foods with a high density of nutrients provides the vitamins & minerals your body needs



Things That Can Affect Cravings

Here are a few reasons you might be craving food. Some are physiological, and some are emotional. The more you can understand each of these contributing factors and how they may be affecting you and your food cravings, the easier it will be for you to get to the root of the problem.

1. HUNGER HORMONES

Did you know that we have hunger hormones? One is to increase our appetite and make us eat, while another hormone primarily works to decrease our appetite.

Leptin

The leptin hormone lives in our fat cells. It regulates our energy balance and helps to suppress our appetite and the amount of food we choose to eat. It is the hormone that says 'stop eating I'm full'. This hormone acts on the brain and is connected with body weight and the regulating of food intake.

- High levels of this hormone in the body tell the brain that we have plenty of fat in storage and allow it burn energy.
- Low levels of leptin inform the mind that we are in starvation mode and that we need to hold onto the fat.

When functioning optimally, this hormone may make it easier to resist the temptation of eating high calorie foods. Unfortunately, studies have shown that people who are obese have often become **resistant** to the signals of leptin, despite the fact that they have high amounts of leptin in their body.

This resistance means that the brain does not respond to the leptin trigger as it should. The body perceives leptin resistance as starvation. Therefore, they continually want to consume more and more food.

Regularly eating more calories than you burn, particularly from sugars and starchy carbohydrates, can lead to leptin resistance, as the body becomes unable to determine that your body fat levels are too high, and leptin receptors become desensitized.

Some of the key players in leptin resistance are:

- High-carb, high-sugar diets, which cause insulin spikes that raise leptin production
- Diets high in fast food (which contain a combination of refined carbs and fat together)
- Starvation
- Excess stress
- Irregular sleep
- Lack of regular physical exercise

Ghrelin

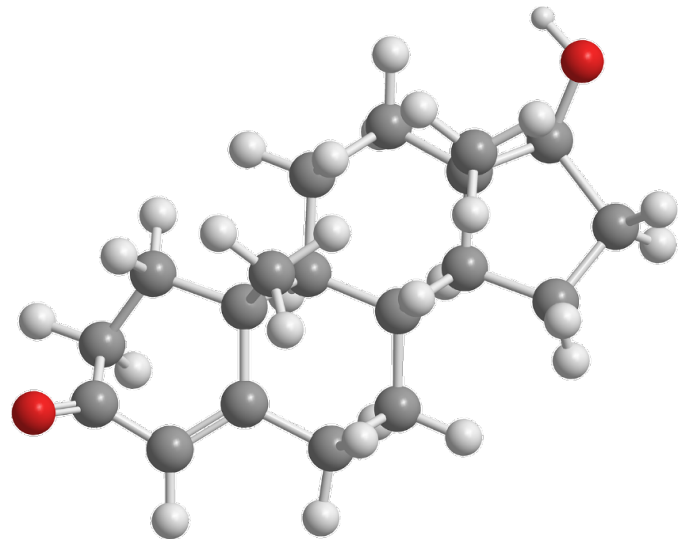
Ghrelin also commonly referred to as the “hunger hormone” is responsible for boosting our appetite. This hormone resides in our stomach and sends hunger signals to the brain. Normally, ghrelin levels dramatically increase when a person is hungry and eventually subside after having a meal.

Studies indicate that having high levels of ghrelin can make junk-food and high calorie snacks seem more appealing. This may be why we choose chocolate or cake over the refrigerator full of fruits and vegetables, more so when we are hungrier. The effect of this hormone is so profound that it mimics a fasting state within the body.

The brain responds with a mild panic response, causing it to target high-energy , calorie-dense foods. These are normally the food types which provide more energy than be readily used by the body, and are quickly stored as fat.

This is why there is an increased appetite for high-calorie foods and not low calorie items. Studies show that the brain reward system became more active in patients who were administered ghrelin as compared to those who were not.

Ghrelin was found to be released often in response to stress, which partly explains why many people tend to eat more when faced with high-stress situations. More details about stress and hunger are explained later in this book.



How Macronutrients Affect Our Hunger Hormones

A study led by David Cummings, M.D. from the University of Washington revealed how macronutrients influence the ups and downs of one's appetite. During the said study, experts found that **proteins have the highest influence with regard to suppressing a person's appetite.**

Fats were found to have neutral effects on an individual's appetite. Researchers discovered that although carbohydrates initially lower one's appetite, they will **later increase an individual's appetite to levels that are higher than before** the carbohydrates were introduced into the body.

Sleep and hunger hormones

Sleep deprivation plays a significant role in the misfire of these two hormones. studies show that your ghrelin levels become elevated when you are sleep deprived which is why after a few sleepless nights, you often feel hungrier.

A protein-rich breakfast can positively influence hormones & appetite for the rest of the day



Even 1 hour of sleep deprivation can affect your food choices, causing you to reach for more sugary and starchy high-calorie foods. One research study found that for every hour of sleep reduction, there was an 80% increase in obesity, due to changes in cravings and food choices.

You should aim for a minimum of seven to nine hours of sleep each night to keep these hormones from getting out of control. More information on sleep will be discussed later.

How to optimize hunger hormone balance:

Exercise

Regular physical activity has been shown to have a positive effect on both leptin and insulin sensitivity. A study at the University of Florida found that moderate exercise supports and regulates leptin to work properly, consequently helping to control weight.

Many experts report that high intensity interval training (HIIT) has a positive effect on regulating leptin. HIIT stimulates large secretions of the human growth hormone that helps to boost fat burning and regulates leptin levels.

Short bursts of vigorous activity versus long slow and steady cardio sessions seem to yield positive effects on leptin, as they do on insulin and both of these hormones have tendencies towards resistance in the body.

A simple walking program that incorporates intervals can help flip both the leptin and insulin switches towards proper functioning, and as both of these hormones begin to operate efficiently, your appetite, metabolism and energy levels will improve.

Exercising on an empty stomach further boosts the beneficial effect on leptin and ghrelin, in addition to promoting insulin sensitivity and glucose tolerance. Insulin is another major player in maintaining energy balance and calorie utilization, so it's a welcome bonus.



Eat breakfast

Studies have been conducted that confirm when you skip breakfast, rich, high-calorie foods are more appealing due to the powers of ghrelin. It is particularly important to include protein in your first meal of the day, as it will promote satiety which can have effects that last 24 hours after the meal.

Studies show that individuals who enjoyed a higher-calorie breakfast ended up producing approximately 33% less ghrelin during the day and also felt satisfied for a longer period of time. There are also positive effects to blood sugar and insulin regulation seen when high protein breakfasts are consumed.

Avoid refined sugars and starches

Eliminate excess fructose, sugars, simple starches and refined foods from your diet. When you consume sugars and simple carbohydrates, such as white pasta, white bread or other refined carbohydrates, your blood sugar levels dramatically rise. When this occurs, the body responds by releasing a surge of insulin to protect you from the excess sugar in the bloodstream.

Once the insulin has efficiently stored the excess, low blood sugar re-occurs. This triggers your hunger hormones once again. By keeping insulin levels stable, you delay the release of sugar into the bloodstream and this process allows the body to feel full longer.

Omeegas

Cut down on your Omega-6 fatty acid consumption. The predominant source of concentrated omega-6 comes from vegetable and seed oils, like canola oil, sunflower oil, soya oil, corn oil, and of course, general vegetable oil. We need some omega-6 fatty acids in our diet (which can be attained by consuming nuts, seeds, & meat), however, the excess that is contained in these processed oils is more than what the body can handle. When we consume more than the optimal ratio amount of omega 6 to omega 3 fatty acids, excess leads to damaging inflammation in the body. To learn more about vegetable oils and the problems associated with them, you can read an [article I wrote here](#).

As well, it can be helpful to Add Omega-3 fatty acids into your diet. Excellent sources include fish, lamb, certain seaweeds, ground flax seeds, and chia seeds.



Take your time

Eat meals more slowly. It takes the brain time to recognize and respond to the leptin signals. Gorging means you will consume a lot before feeling full, but will feel uncomfortably full after. Ghrelin levels remain elevated until food stretches the stomach wall and initiates a feeling of fullness. It can take 20 minutes for ghrelin to lower and your brain to get the signal that you are full.

Food choices

By choosing high-volume foods that are low-calorie, you can help reduce your ghrelin levels before overeating. Therefore, making the main focus of your meals high in protein paired with non-starchy vegetables will benefit your hunger hormones for several reasons.

First, the protein will stimulate the highest level of satiety of all of the macronutrients. Including non-starchy vegetables will provide bulk and fibre with minimal calories and carbohydrates, which will stretch your stomach to reduce your ghrelin levels. Lastly, meats, fish, and vegetables are the most nutrient dense foods, providing you with a maximum level of vitamins and minerals for the calorie content it contains.

This means you will receive the nutrition you receive without consuming more calories than your body needs. Because your body will be well-nourished with nutrients, your body will be less likely to generate hunger signals and food cravings.



2. MICROBIOME

Micro-what? Your microbiome is the population of tiny bacteria that live in your intestines. They are important for proper digestion, immune function, and a whole host of other functions in the body.

These little guys can also influence your cravings when they are not in optimal balance. How, you ask? Through a system of neurons within your gut called the enteric nervous system. This system communicates with your brain, controls the function of your gastrointestinal tract, and is often referred to as the “second brain”.

A large number of neurotransmitters are not only produced in the brain, but also in the gut! Some examples include serotonin and dopamine. The bacteria in your gut can influence the production of these neurotransmitters. As explained a little later, your neurotransmitters can affect food cravings significantly. Therefore, ensuring optimal balance of your microbiome is important to help you control your cravings.



What can affect your microbiome

There are many things that can disrupt the proper balance of your microbiome. When you know the causes, you can then correct them, which will naturally provide a more optimal terrain for your microbiome to balance itself out.

Factors such as stress, inadequate sleep, alcohol use, antibiotic use, and other medications can disrupt the balance of your microbiome. Dietary factors can also disrupt your microbiome, in particular the amount of sugar, vegetable oils, and other refined and ultra-processed foods you consume.

Therefore, it is imperative for the proper balance of your microbiome to find effective ways to manage stress, get enough good-quality sleep, and choose whole, nutrient-dense foods with minimal added sugar, refined flours, chemicals, and vegetable oils.

Repeated antibiotic use kills bacteria in your body, including the useful ones in your intestines. Therefore, it is important to reserve antibiotic use for situations that absolutely require them. Speak with your doctor about your antibiotic use and medication use if you think they may be affecting the balance of your microbiome.

You can support your microbiome by eating certain foods. First, there are foods called **prebiotics**. These are foods that contain a certain type of fermentable fibre that your microbiome use as fuel. Some examples of foods that contain prebiotics include onions, garlic, sweet potatoes, and plantains.

As well, **probiotics** are the bacteria themselves, and ingesting them can help to re-populate an imbalanced bacterial flora. Food sources of probiotics include yogurt (remember to choose natural, unsweetened yogurt!), and fermented vegetables like sauerkraut.

Unfortunately, many sauerkrauts you will find at the grocery store are pasteurized, which means that the good bacteria has been killed off. Look for unpasteurized fermented vegetables; they will always be found in the refrigerated section. Alternatively, you can make your own, with whatever combination of vegetables you desire! Remember that a little bit can go a long way!

You can also find probiotics in a form of a supplement, which is a highly concentrated population of bacteria for your intestines. Speak with a qualified health practitioner like a Functional Medicine Doctor or Naturopathic Doctor to figure out if this supplement is right for you.

3. CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates can increase your cravings and hunger –specifically high-glycemic carbohydrates. These types of carbohydrates are quick to be absorbed into the bloodstream and quickly raise blood glucose levels, which contribute to overeating and eventually, weight gain. This includes simple sugars, like candy and sweets, along with refined flours and ultra-processed foods.

Sugar activates the reward center in your brain almost exactly the same way that illegal drugs like heroin and cocaine do. Endless studies in laboratory rats show that sugar activates your mental "pleasure center" better than cocaine or crack.

This is a classic food addiction response. The food you eat, whether it is good or bad for you, elicits a "Wow!" response in your brain. Since your brain is hardwired to help you achieve pleasure and avoid pain, it remembers that experience.

The next time you are bored, hungry, stressed out, or you simply spot some deliciously sweet, sugar-filled food or beverage, one or more of your 5 senses lets your brain know.

Your brain gets excited by this, and even if you are not hungry, you see your hand reaching forward, almost unconsciously, your mouth begins to water, your eyes bug out and sugar-related aromas fill your nose.

Even before you take a bite or a drink, your brain begins to release a massive amount of dopamine in a part of your brain called the nucleus accumbens. When this food is eaten regularly and in excessive amounts, you need more and more dopamine to get the same levels of happiness and fulfillment.



Dopamine Resistance

This is the exact same way those addicted to drugs have to continually take in more drugs to achieve the original "high" that fewer drugs used to give them. Your dopamine receptors become blunted. So it takes a lot more dopamine and other feel-good chemicals to make your brain feel as good as it did when you ate sugar in the past. This is how junk foods and sugar literally hijack your brain chemistry to make you crave more and more.

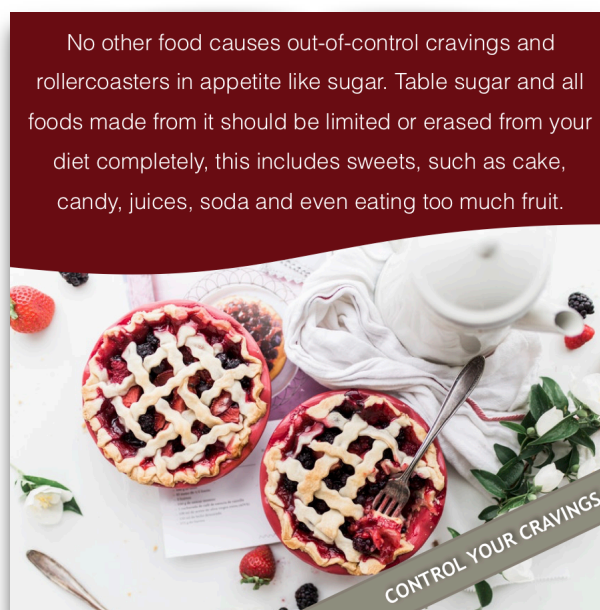
Since sugar is a classic example of a nutrient-poor, simple carbohydrate that leads to obesity, your sugar addiction immediately improves your odds of developing the cancer, diabetes, heart disease and neurological problems directly related to overweight and obesity.

Sugar – Cheap and Nasty

Because sugar is one of the cheapest and most powerful chemicals to use in food, manufacturers use it all the time. Any food that you see listed on ingredients label that ends in the suffix “-ose” is sugar. This is one sneaky way food manufacturers attempt to hide the presence of sugar in foods that may otherwise look healthy.

Start reading food labels diligently. Choose foods with minimal lists of ingredients, or no ingredient list at all because it's a whole food and therefore doesn't come in a package!

Make the focus of your meals good-quality protein and non-starchy vegetables. The more you fill yourself up with these nutrient-dense foods, the less you will feel the urge to fill up on refined sugar and flours later.



4. STRESS

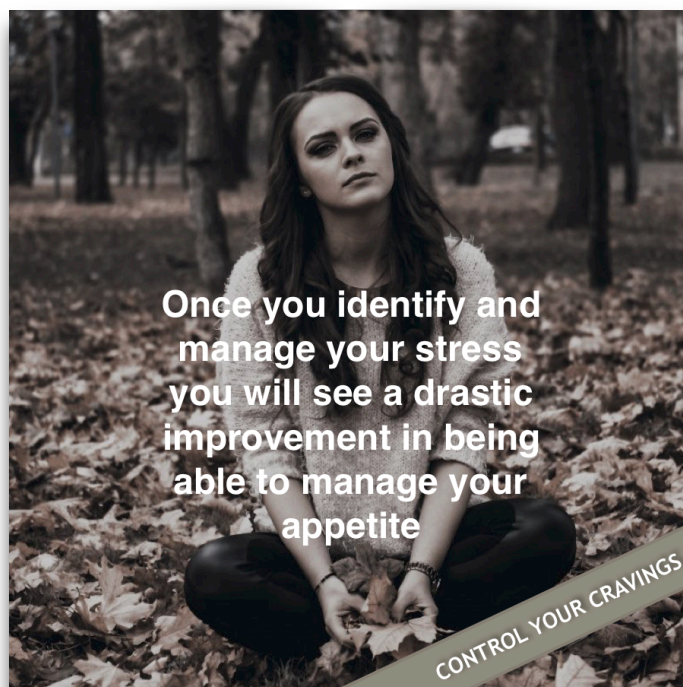
Sometimes, a stress-filled day can leave you desperate for a juicy cheeseburger and box of French fries. Comfort food has a way of making us all feel a little better –at least for a little while. What triggers such a surge in emotional demand for these comfort foods? Stress is a nasty animal that affects our body in many ways.

One side effect is that it triggers the release of adrenaline and cortisol, two hormones that amp up in production during our most difficult moments. With the increase of these hormones, our body starts to feel like it has to ramp up to keep our energy functioning at its peak which enhances those feelings of hunger. Cortisol is what triggers our cravings for foods that are salty, sweet, and fried.

As well, stress stimulates the increased production of the hunger hormone called ghrelin. This hormone stimulates the release of dopamine in the brain, which tells the body that it wants to eat.

Next, the chemical in our brain known as serotonin also experience a drop in levels making us feel hungry when in reality, we are not hungry. All of these hormones and neurotransmitters are released during when you are experiencing extended periods of stress, in order for you to seek foods that will give you a burst of energy and pleasure.

Stress can cut your appetite in the short-term, but over the long-term, your cortisol level is essentially jammed at the on switch. Therefore, even though the stressful situation is gone and your cortisol levels should return to normal they haven't, they're still elevated, wreaking havoc.



Are you stress-eating?

There are many differences between eating because you are stressed out and eating because your body physically needs it. However, when you are stressed it can be difficult to tell the difference. Here are some of the biggest differences between stress eating and eating because you physically need it.

- ➔ When you are hungry because of stress, it comes on suddenly and feels overwhelming. Physical hunger comes on gradually and doesn't demand to be instantly satiated.
- ➔ When you are physically hungry, all food sounds good. You just want something to eat. However, when the hunger is due to stress you will find yourself craving specific foods, such as cheesecake or pizza.
- ➔ When you are eating due to stress, you are typically eating mindlessly without really thinking about how much you are eating. However, when you are eating for physical hunger, you tend to be more aware of how much you are eating and when you are full.
- ➔ Physical hunger is satiated when your stomach is full. If you are stress eating, your mind will still want more food even when your stomach is full. This is because stress hunger doesn't come from the stomach. There is no hunger pang, instead, you tend to be fixating on the texture, taste, and smell of a specific food that you can't get out of your head.
- ➔ When you are eating to deal with stress, there are often feelings of guilt after you eat. This can be because you ate a whole pint of ice cream or a whole bag of chips and you know it isn't good for you.



How You Can Stop Stress Eating

Knowing that you are stress eating is the first step to being able to overcome the habit because you are acknowledging that eating isn't the issue. The real issue is the stress and that needs to be dealt with to completely overcome stress eating.

One of the best ways to overcome stress eating is to take mindfulness training. A study that was published in the Journal of Obesity found that women who took mindfulness training were less likely to stress eat. Some of this mindfulness training included learning stress reduction techniques, how to effectively recognize hunger, and how to pay attention to the taste of the foods they were eating.

Eating for joy or to make yourself feel better isn't always a bad thing. If you can recognize the reason, you are reaching for those snacks and can do so in moderation. Focus on the taste and texture of what you are eating. Enjoy one brownie instead of the whole batch, or one bowl of ice cream instead of the whole tub. Here is [an exercise you can try](#) with chocolate to practice mindful eating.

Manage Stressors

Identify the stressors in your life and establish an action plan to take control or get rid of them.

Finding ways to control how you react to stress is a very helpful and effective way to help you control your physiological responses to stress.

An exercise like deep breathing on a daily basis is a very helpful technique to help calm your nervous system. Read my [explication about it here](#). Taking regular breaks and time out for yourself is also very important.

If you take care of everyone else first and place yourself last on your priority list, it may be time to reconsider your priority list. You aren't doing yourself nor the people around you any favours by neglecting your own self care.

Practicing mindfulness has also been proven to be a very effective way to improve your stress management skills. There are many ways to practice mindfulness, a popular method is to practice mindfulness meditations. This is sort of a way to train your brain to focus on what is happening right now, instead of focusing on future and past events that are either long-gone or have yet to transpire. There are many apps available for your electronic devices that offer guided mindfulness meditations to help you get started. Even 5 minutes a day can make a difference.

5. SOCIAL EATING & TRIGGERS

Social Eating

Ever caught yourself eating just because others around you were enjoying the flavor of a good meal? Social eating occurs when we consume calories in a social setting despite planning not to participate in a meal. Add alcohol to the mix, and we lose our inhibitions and self-control when food is available.

You know yourself and your weaknesses. Try to avoid situations where you might opt to overeat or pig out! Keep yourself busy at night instead of sitting on the couch mindlessly eating. If you go out with the girls every Friday night and have dessert, change the routine. Switch things up to do whatever it takes to get rid of the cause of your cravings.

Again, here is where awareness is important. If you can realize social eating, stress eating, and emotional food triggers are issues for you, then you can start making different choices in the moment.

If you know social eating is an issue for you, try making sure to have a protein-packed meal or snack before heading out to the event. The protein will help with your ghrelin levels and help you feel more satiated. This will help you to control what foods you will choose.

Mental and Emotional Triggers

The human body and mind are intimately linked. According to what you eat, the experiences you have, the amount of physical activity you engage in, your environment, relationships and a ton of other factors, your emotional, physical and mental states of being will be affected in some way.

Pay attention to possible associations between your cravings, and any trigger that is occurring. It may be a stressful event, a certain smell, a certain event or celebration, a location you go to, or anything else! Keeping a cravings journal can help you figure out what your craving triggers may be.

6. DEHYDRATION

Our bodies often send a signal that it is dehydrated by disguising it in the cloak of hunger. Our body is comprised of at least 60 percent of water and needs it for basic survival. Water plays a vital role in

- Ridding the body of wastes via perspiration, urination and bowel movements
- Regulates our body temperature, helping to keep it within a reasonable range
- Acts as a lubricant for our joints
- Protects sensitive tissues

When we fail to drink adequate amounts of water, our body responds with feelings of fatigue and hunger. Therefore, sometimes cravings are actually just your body trying to tell you that you are thirsty.

7. DIET SODAS

Are you a die-hard fan of diet sodas? If you think you are sparing your body from drinking too many calories, the real risk is that you may be turning the hunger hormones on and triggering demand for food. Diet sodas stimulate sugar cravings and can contribute to weight gain.

Often we turn to low calorie, artificially flavoured beverages to keep our calorie consumption low. The problem is that the chemical sweeteners cause us to crave more food, particularly carbohydrates.

8. MEDICATION

WebMD says that some medications can change our appetites including steroids, antihistamines, antidepressants, antipsychotics and some diabetic medications.

9. HEALTH CONDITIONS

Appetite increase can be the direct result of a health condition or disease you are not aware even exists within our bodies such as mental illness, diabetes, Graves disease, poor sleep, hyperthyroidism, low blood sugar, pregnancy, and premenstrual syndrome to name a few (medlineplus.gov).



What To Do About It

So now you know some of the contributing factors to food cravings and hunger. There are many more, but these are popular ones. Now that you know what they are, what can you do about it? In this chapter, you will learn some approaches you can try to help you reduce your food cravings.

Ditch Sugar

No other food causes out-of-control cravings and rollercoasters in appetite like sugar. Table sugar and all foods made from it should be limited or erased from your diet completely, this includes sweets, such as cake, candy, juices, soda and even eating too much fruit.

The following are just a few of the many names you will find on processed food labels which alert you to the presence of sugar.

- High Fructose Corn Syrup
- Sucrose, Glucose, Fructose and any “-ose” words
- Honey
- Corn Syrup
- Inverted Sugar Syrup
- Molasses
- Brown Sugar
- Evaporated Cane Juice
- Fruit Juice Crystals
- Dehydrated Fruit Juice
- Corn Sweetener
- Fruit Juice Concentrate
- Turbinado Sugar
- Malt Syrup
- Syrup
- Glucose Syrup
- Carob Syrup
- Table Sugar
- Malt
- Buttered Syrup
- Agave Nectar
- Corn Syrup Solids
- Organic Raw Sugar
- Raisin Syrup



Remove the source

By clearing all unhealthy foods out of reach, you will decrease the risk of falling prey to temptation.

Talk With Your Doctor About Your Medications

If find your medications are affecting your appetite and your cravings, let your doctor know. There may be another medication or treatment option.

Choose Solids Instead Of Liquids

Liquids may affect the appetite differently than solids. Studies show that those who eat solid snacks rather than liquids are far more likely to report feeling full and consuming less at their next meal than those who drink liquids as their main meal. Therefore, a protein shake for breakfast might not be the best way to help you feel satiated for the rest of your day.



Eat Protein

Protein is another great asset in your diet that can generate feelings of fullness. Start with breakfast. Having protein with your first meal of the day will enable you to start your day the right way!

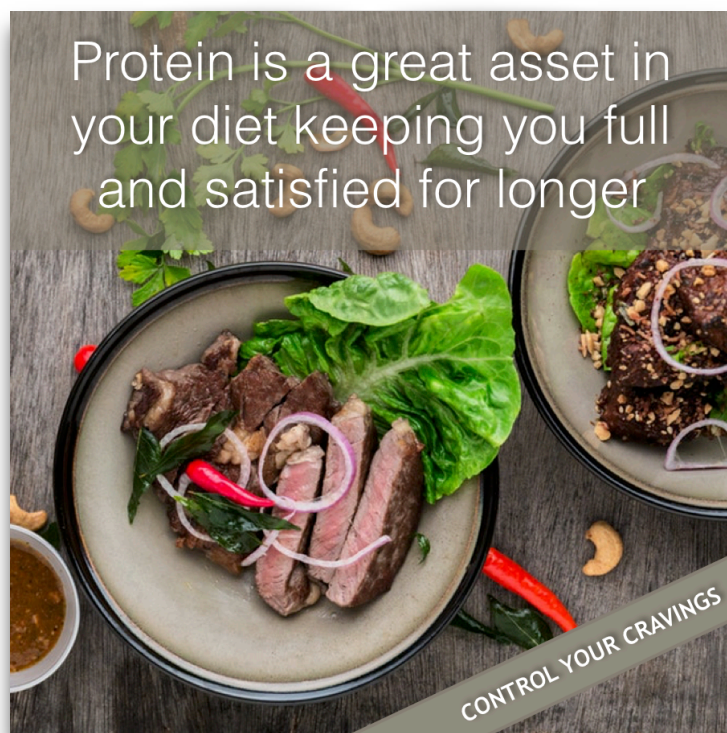
One weight loss study demonstrated that those who ate a breakfast that consisted of eggs lost 65 percent more weight than those who ate bagels.

Animal-based sources of protein include fish, meat, chicken, turkey, dairy, and eggs. Plant-based sources of protein include hemp seeds, chia seeds, nuts, and soybeans.

Plan to eat protein at every meal, and with snacks if you eat them. Protein helps balance blood sugar levels because it is harder to process and takes longer to digest than carbohydrates. It also helps you feel fuller, for longer.

This means your blood sugar levels do not spike like they quickly do when you consume simple carbohydrates which are absorbed into your bloodstream rapidly.

Since your blood sugar levels don't spike, and they stay steady throughout the day, you automatically and unconsciously have fewer sugar and junk food cravings.



Handy Protein Sources

Keeping a dozen or more hard-boiled eggs on hand in the refrigerator is a fast and simple way to get a complete protein into your body. It is amazing how full one or two boiled eggs can make you feel, especially when compared to the types of food that that keep you eating more and more.

Almonds, sunflower seeds, walnuts and other nuts also provide a healthy and quick protein dose. Adding 3 tablespoons of hemp or chia seeds to natural, unsweetened greek yogurt can give you a nice protein punch. Add berries, vanilla, and cinnamon to provide some lovely flavours.

Exercise

Get your endorphins flowing with a bit of physical training and fresh air. Exercise may reduce hunger hormone levels and create a temporary feeling of fullness. Exercise reduces stimulation to some areas of the brain that are known to generate hunger.

Also, Exercise triggers the release of hormones like dopamine and serotonin, meaning you can give yourself a dose of these “feel good” hormones without indulging in sugary and ultra-processed foods.

Studies demonstrate that exercise not only helps to reduce hunger levels but can support your attempts to decrease portion size. Aim for daily activity but do not overdo it or it can leave you feeling hungry and weighed down by fatigue. Regular walking can be extremely helpful, and then add 3 days a week of high-intensity work like HIIT, tabata, weights, or body weight exercises.

As well, exercise can help you with your efforts to manage stress, which is a win-win!



Get your endorphins flowing with exercise and fresh air as exercise may reduce hunger hormone levels, create a temporary feeling of fullness and reduces stimulation to some areas of the brain that are known to generate hunger

CONTROL YOUR CRAVINGS

Go To Bed


Sleep studies show that sleep deprivation is connected with obesity and fat gain. Your body needs down time each night in order to rest, recharge, and function optimally.

Sleep may feel like a luxury, but if you are ever to get your arms around your appetite, you have to get adequate sleep. Remember, sleep is what helps to keep leptin and ghrelin in check. Try creating a regularly scheduled bed time and stick to it as often as you can. Every hour of sleep before midnight is important, so try not to stay up too late!

Turn Off Electronic Devices

Your technology may be causing you to eat more. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine indicates that people who turn off these blue light emitting devices before and during their meal are less likely to experience hunger or insulin resistance.

Blue lights can also interfere with sleep, causing almost as much stimulation as coffee. So while you're at it, avoid electronic devices before bedtime, as well.



Sleep may feel like a luxury, but if you are ever to control your appetite, you have to get adequate sleep

CONTROL YOUR CRAVINGS

Dim The Lights

Dim the lights! According to Cornell University, eating under dim lights not makes your meals more pleasant, but they may help you to eat 18 percent less food and increase chances of weight loss.

Keep those lights dimmed after supper, and you will prime yourself for better sleep. The light receptors in the back of your eyes will not relay the message to your brain to produce the sleep hormone melatonin if the lights they are exposed to are too bright.



Drink Water

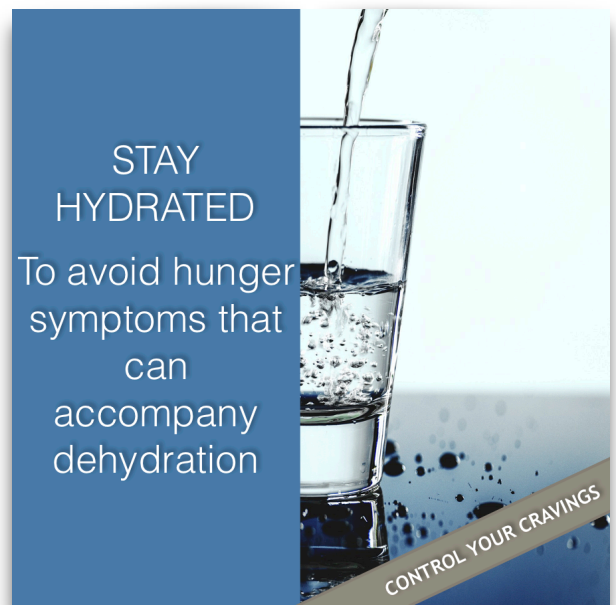
To avoid hunger symptoms that can accompany dehydration, we have to make a habit each day of consuming adequate levels of water to keep the body functioning at optimal levels. Drink water at the first signs of hunger. Wait for 20 minutes.

Your goal here is to differentiate hunger from the need to reach for a bite to eat. If you are still hungry after 15 to 20 minutes, the chances are that you may truly need a snack or meal.

Slow Down And Chew Your Food

Do you find yourself inhaling your food at every sitting? Are you hungry an hour later? Studies show that the simple act of slowing down to chew and digest your food can help to regulate the ghrelin, our food craving hormone while boosting the hormone cholecystokinin.

Your goal should be to spend 30 seconds chewing each bite of your food to trigger this response in your body. Take your time chewing your food, because as already mentioned, it takes 20 minutes for your brain to get the signal that you have eaten enough. Your digestion will appreciate this adjustment, as well!



Brushing your teeth is a great way to trick your brain into not wanting food



CONTROL YOUR CRAVINGS

Brush Your Teeth

Get your toothbrush and toothpaste out for the next tip! Brushing your teeth is a fantastic way to trick your brain into not wanting food. Who craves food after the taste of toothpaste? Brushing your teeth is yet another method to decipher between the feelings of genuine hunger and a little craving. It's also a great way to play tricks on your mind since we typically reserve brushing our teeth for those hours of the day when we do not usually consume food.

Ride it out

Sometimes if you are having a craving, all you have to do is wait and it will pass. Often, if you wait just 10 to 15 minutes, the craving will pass. In the meantime, try a glass of water or something to distract you while you are waiting. You may find that you forget all about that craving!

Blue Plates Anyone?

Did you know that the colour blue is a natural appetite suppressant? Some experts even recommend placing a blue light inside of your refrigerator. Stock up on blue plates and stay away from those orange, red, and yellow plates as these colours are shown to have the opposite effect on your cravings.

Trade in Those Big Plates

It may be time to downsize your plates so that you can teach your stomach to appreciate smaller servings. In time, this will help your stomach to feel full after smaller servings.



Trade in Those Big Plates

Downsize your plates so that you can teach your stomach to appreciate smaller servings

CONTROL YOUR CRAVINGS

Find Distraction

Sometimes, merely creating a distraction can help you to get your mind off of food. Consider reading a book, cleaning out a closet, take a walk, or doing laundry to distract yourself from wanting to eat.

Say no to deprivation

When you deprive yourself completely or more importantly feel deprived, you increase the chances of going overboard with your cravings. Tons of studies show that people who periodically give into their cravings, in moderation of course are less likely to blow it by overdosing on a regular basis.

So instead of eating a whole bag of chips, put a few in bowl and call it quits. Better yet, if you are looking for salty snack put a handful of pretzels into the dish and enjoy. This gives your mind ultimate satisfaction and decreases the red flag risk you're going to indulge in a pig-out session.

Dark Chocolate

Trick your sweet tooth and appetite with a taste of dark chocolate. Dark chocolate sends signals to the body, curing both a sweet tooth and hunger pangs. Choose 70% cocoa content or above to ensure that the sugar content is kept to a minimum. [Here is a recipe](#) you can try at home.



Practice Mindful Eating

Today's world moves at 100 mph. We are often multi-tasking, doing more than one thing at a time whether we are at work or home. We complete tasks without thinking to the point that they are just about mindless. Mindless eating, as some refer to this practice, can become a problem over time –particularly since our brain does not recognize it is full for nearly twenty minutes after we finish eating.

We eat and eat past the point of satisfaction. We see this with binge eating quite often where we gorge on food past the point of return. With mindful eating, we can dedicate our full attention to our meal and slow down to intentionally consume our food at a leisurely pace.

Mindful eating (ME) has its origins in Buddhist teachings. Just some people practice sitting in silence and participating in meditation, ME encourages students to meditate with their food. ME requires us to be present and aware at the moment as we are eating. During meals, where distraction might take hold, mindful eating helps us to shift our energy to the meal before us rather than engage in other things.

Mindful eating proposes that we pay close attention to what our bodies are telling us and what it is we are putting into our mouths. It suggests that we make every effort to indulge in healthy food choices that we do not purchase from restaurants but instead must purchase, prepare and serve ourselves for best results.

Adopting mindful eating practices means having to approach meals differently. During ME, you shift your consciousness by focusing on the sensation and purpose of each grain of food. It is not to be confused with dieting. ME is not a diet. Rather, it is all about you experiencing meals in a different light and challenging us to rethink how we encounter food.



Tips To Build The Mindful Eating Habit

The Mindful Eating Grocery List

Choose as many nutrient-dense, whole foods as possible. Focusing on a variety of proteins and non-starchy vegetables as the base of your grocery list is optimal.

Eating When Hungry vs. Starving

Mindful eating means eating when you are physically hungry and stopping when you are full. You are not giving up any food, but you are examining your eating habits and whether or not the food you are eating is satisfying.

Recognizing Emotional Eating and Real Hunger Signs

When we are in tune with our minds and bodies, we also know when stress, frustration, loneliness or boredom are driving our dietary habits. Mindful eating suggests we pay close attention to hunger signals and take the time to differentiate them from emotional hunger triggers.

Consider How Food Makes You Feel

As you are eating, use this time to reflect on how this food makes you feel. Imagine having just consumed an entire bowl of refined carbohydrates. How does it make

you feel? Do you feel good about what you just ate? Do you feel bad? Will you eat another bowl of this food in the future? Maybe you will think about changing your portion size.

Stopping When Full

Your body will let you know when you are full. With mindful eating, you should take note and recognize all of the signs that it's time to halt versus eating past your stomach's real capacity. Your pace is purposeful, and you are in sync with your body, stopping when your body says it is full. Ideally, you are chewing each bite twenty to thirty times, setting your utensil down, then picking it up when its time for another bite.



Get Rid Of The Distractions

Seize every opportunity you can for quiet time and reflection. Silence is a wonderful way to concentrate on the food you are consuming and incorporating mindful eating practices. Of course, if the ability to enjoy a quiet meal is not realistic, look for other ways like snack time to enjoy the peace.

Savour The Taste

Close your eyes and taste every herb, spice, and splash of lemon. Savour the textures and flavours in your mouth and reflect your meal. You can talk with others briefly about your meal or silently reflect on each ingredient in peace.

Sit At The Dinner Table

Get off the couch and sit down at the dinner table where you can focus on the meal at hand.

Start With One Meal

The good news is that you do not have to dive in head-first to completely changing every meal into a mindful eating event. You can choose a single meal to practice mindful eating habits to start, then slowly, increase the practice of ME over a several weeks and months.



Finding the perfect formula to curb your appetite may seem overwhelming, but it is completely manageable. There several natural ways to control your cravings whether choosing to pursue mindful eating or electing to increase the number of nutrient-dense, whole foods in your diet. You can naturally take control of your hunger, reducing the urge to binge on unhealthy foods and potentially promote weight loss.

Conclusion

In this book we have discussed a variety of causes for food cravings, both physiological and emotional. Each person is different, and their causes can vary greatly. It is important for you to determine which of these causes might be issues for you. **The more you are aware of what is out of balance, the better equipped you will be to find some solutions.**

I have also listed a variety of adjustments to your diet and lifestyle you can try to help you control your food cravings. You may not be able to do all of these things at once, and that's ok. Changes can happen step-by-step, and with each step you take, you will be farther along your path than if you did nothing at all.

It can be an important first step to make sure you are getting a quality source of protein with every meal and snack. Adding something in is easier than excluding something from your diet. Once you experience more satiety between meals, it can then be easier to start limiting other foods, like refined and processed sugars and flours.

I hope that you find the information in this book to be useful and helpful for you. It can be important to remember that our bodies function because of a finely balanced series of biochemical reactions.

The food that we put into our bodies can affect these reactions one way or another, depending on what we choose. As well, our lifestyle habits like sleep or lack of, exercise, stress, etc, can influence a whole host of biochemical reactions, which in turn affect the fine balance of hormones, neurotransmitters, and more.

Instead of thinking of food as a delicious source of happiness, instead think of it as a quality fuel source for the millions of biochemical reactions in your body. **Just like a car, poor fuel and maintenance can negatively impact performance.** This perspective may just help you next time you find yourself staring at that piece of cake and wondering if you should give in to its tempting aroma.

Keep on making positive changes one step at a time, and before you know it, you will be well on your way to feeling better, and living the life you want and love!

Yours in Wellness,

Michelle Dowker MSc, ND

Wellness Strategist

wellbalance.ca

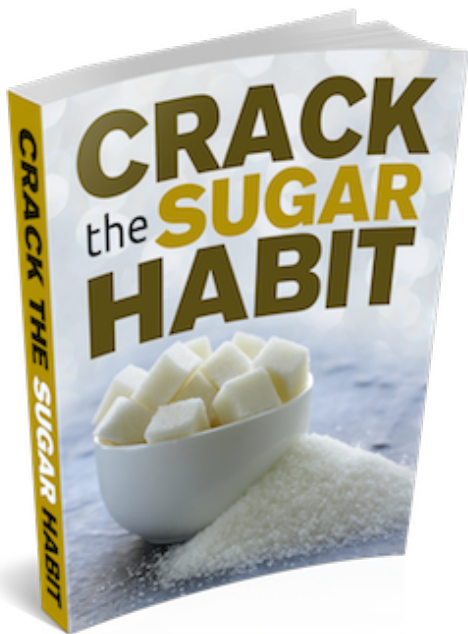
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