

Eat me!

Nutritionist **Lisa McLean** looks at why you crave certain foods and offers some strategies to keep you on track

You are what you crave!

For some of us it's an after-dinner craving of something sweet, for others, it's a mid-morning savoury hit. Whatever the danger zone, most of us are familiar with the desire for foods that deep down we know we really shouldn't eat. But something keeps overriding that sensible voice in the back of our heads that says 'you don't really need that'.

vegetables; chicken noodle soup when you're sick; an ice cream at the shops if you've been good, and so on. These subconscious associations with foods that we have had through childhood and adolescence are a hard habit to break in adulthood, especially for those of us who are prone to emotional eating.

So what should you do when that feeling sweeps over us? When we're at our desk trying to

A craving typically lasts up to 20 minutes, so if you can wait it out for that time you should be out of the danger zone

Most cravings can be explained by a dip in the blood sugar, signalling to our brain that we need another carbohydrate hit. This is not to say that we always will crave breads, pastas or sugary foods. Humans are designed to enjoy foods with fat, sugar and salt, and associations with certain foods as well as acquired tastes can explain our cravings for non-carbohydrate foods. It doesn't help that most of us were raised to associate foods with emotions – such as desserts as a bonus when you finish your

concentrate on our work, or a bit bored at home, and the desire to check the pantry is overwhelming? Before you dig in, take the time ask yourself why you're really craving food. Are you actually hungry, or are you using food to make you feel better, to put off something else, or because you're bored? Identifying the issue that is making us eat is the best start to overcoming it.

Why you emotional eat

If you feel that you're eating emotionally, focus on what your



body is really after: so if you're tired, take a nap instead of going for a slice of cake, and try to plan your day better so that you can get to bed on time. Often thirst is mistaken for hunger, so try to ensure you're getting enough liquid through the day, and when you do have a craving, have some water first and see how you feel afterwards. If you want to reward yourself for having accomplished something big in your life, try to think about non-food rewards that you may enjoy – even something small and simple like a new book, socks or plant can make us happy in the same way a chocolate bar can (give it a go before you dismiss that one if you don't believe us!).

Strategies to beat the binge!

Obviously this can be a hard task, especially during the long work days and over the weekends, when we're more out of routine. So here are some hot tips for getting through those cravings and making it through to the other side without crumbs around our mouth and a guilty feeling in the pit of our stomachs.

Wait it out, have a plan

The old favourite – wait 20 minutes to see if it passes. The theory being that the craving typically lasts up to 20 minutes, so if you can wait it out for that time, you should be out of the danger zone.

nutrition



Recognise the familiar urge come over you, and have a plan for what to do. If your work allows it, get up and go for a quick walk up and down the halls, or around the building. If you're at home, be productive – fold some laundry, pull some weeds out of the garden (best to avoid housework that involves the kitchen though!) When you're at the shops, avoid the food court at all costs! If you can see signs of a craving about to hit and you can counteract them via any

spare stash of your favourite foods in the cupboard will haunt the back of your mind and make you more likely to indulge. Help yourself out by ensuring you also have healthy snacks on hand, because even if you're strong enough to resist your favourite treat, you're not necessarily a superwoman! Stock the fridge with healthy snacks, such as fruit, vegies, apples, carrots and celery for when that moment strikes. .

Get those spare blocks of dairy milk out of the cupboard

means of distraction, you might be able to steer clear of giving in.

Clear the pantry

If you know that you're a sucker for chocolate, get those spare blocks of dairy milk out of the cupboard. Having a

– as added bonus, when it's full you can reward yourself with some new heels! If the canteen at work or café down the road only takes cash, by bringing your food from home or only bringing enough money for what you know you'll order, you're less likely to splurge on that vanilla slice or chocolate bar.

Help your pearly whites

Identify your danger zone, be it after lunch, mid-afternoon or after dinner, and counteract it by brushing your teeth. You'll not only do yourself a favour in the area of dental health, but it will put you off eating food. Subconsciously, you are less likely to eat after brushing our teeth, because

this is what you've trained to do your whole life. Not to mention the overpowering minty post-brushing flavour that will ruin the taste of most delicious things. So it's as easy as keeping a small travel toothbrush and paste in the handbag, and this simple trick can help kill those cravings.

Try lupins

Feel fuller almost instantly by including lupin kernel flour in your day. Research conducted at major Australian universities has found that foods containing lupin kernel flour are likely to aid weight management and craving control because it makes you feel full almost instantly. Appetite Right Lupin Formula (www.appetiteright.com.au) is an easy way to include lupins in your diet

SUCK ON THIS....when it comes to curbing cravings, try sugar-free lollipops or lollies. Don't overdo it though – as some sugar-free products have a laxative effect!





and comes in an easy to dissolve powder that can be added to everyday foods and drinks.

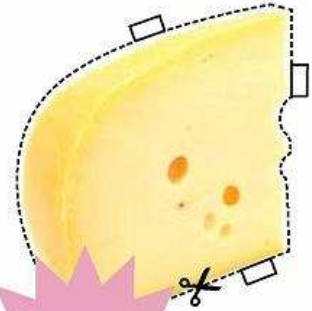
Know your guilty pleasures

Many food companies are now packing foods in smaller portions. The US trend of packing foods in 100 calorie (420 kJ) portions has started to creep into the food market here as well. Get to know your local supermarket shelves and identify foods that you can enjoy, and will get you through the craving – without being too harsh on the waistline, and without making you feel bad about yourself afterwards.

Don't beat yourself up

Feeling awful about giving in could make you even more likely

to give up totally on your resolve, and binge. If you do submit to the craving, it's not going to kill you. But post indulgence, try to make up for it with an extra workout so that you are less likely to do the same thing last time.*



DITCH high-fat cheese for low-fat feta or ricotta