



SWEET CRAVINGS

There's no such thing as a "sweet tooth", except on Netflix. But we use this term to justify reaching for a sweet something to eat or drink - even when we're not hungry or know that it's going to sabotage our health goals. So why do we?

There really is no one size fits all answer, but we hope to arm you with knowledge on how to possibly identify the reasons and some simple tips to achieve success.

Many of us will try and fix our cravings through self-denial, simply saying, 'I will stop'. The problem with this approach is that it's like trying to put a band aid on a broken dam. It may seem fixed but where is the problem really coming from and how can we set ourselves up for long term success? There has to be some form of trigger that causes the behaviour, and each time this behaviour is repeated, soon enough becomes a habit. Is it emotional? Is it boredom, fatigue, or is it your environment?

When we crave certain foods, it is normally high in fat, sugar and carbohydrates, we call this 'hyperpalatable'. I mean, let's be honest, nobody ever craves broccoli. When we eat these indulgent foods, we feel happy and satisfied due to the release of dopamine in the brain. So, it's no wonder why completely cutting out and not addressing the root cause can be challenging.

1

Ensure you are getting enough of your macronutrients:

Proteins, fats and carbohydrates are our essential macronutrients which our body requires for energy and maintaining normal functions. Not getting enough of these can influence our food choices due to the body not feeling fuelled or satiated. Choose lean protein sources, healthy fats and complex carbs in your diet.

2**Keep hydrated:**

Stay topped up with at least 2 litres of water as it provides a huge variety of benefits including improved digestion, blood oxygen circulation and cognitive function. Being fatigued can impact our decisions with food and most commonly people will tend to opt for convenient food sources instead of a nutritionally dense meal.

3**Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep:**

The impact of lack of sleep again impacts our decisions when it comes to food choices, it also impacts our appetite and hunger hormones, leptin and ghrelin. Ghrelin levels rise which can increase our hunger levels and leptin levels decrease which essentially tells our body when it's full.

4**Be mindful:**

Pay attention to your food cravings, are you sat watching TV and an advert popped on for biscuits? Was it a smell? Or is it a response to a stressful situation? If you take time to reflect on if it's actual hunger or pass the time doing something else, this thought generally tends to pass.

5**Set up your environment for success:**

This is quite an easy fix if you take the time to plan. We aren't saying to completely remove these 'treats' but what may in fact help is not having them being openly present in the kitchen. Keep all your healthy foods to the front of the fridge or keep those biscuits off the side and in cupboard. Out of sight, out of mind!

6**Reduce stress levels:**

It's important to take care of our mental health and incorporate different exercises or activities which allow you to relax and feel more at ease, this could be yoga sessions, Pilates, journaling, or even meditation. Take the time to incorporate regular 'me time' each day to help with mindfulness and to keep focus.

Overall, reducing cravings often requires a multi-pronged approach and some trial and error to find what works best for you. But with persistence and patience, you can learn to keep them at bay and maintain a healthy and happy relationship with food.