

10 Tips for Coping with Food Cravings

Cravings can be very challenging to manage when you're trying to stay healthy and lose weight. When your mind tells you that you want (or need!) a bowl of ice cream, it can be tough to resist. Here are some techniques to help you overcome cravings:

- 1. Use your mind to curb a craving.** Rather than resist/fight the craving, either:
 - A) "Urge surf" or acknowledge the craving without acting on it.** Label it as a "**thought**" and **NOT** a **physical need** that must be acted upon. Say out loud, "That's a thought about craving food". Then, move on with whatever you're doing and see if you notice a change in how often you give into a craving.
 - B) Imagine yourself engaging in a favorite non-food activity:** Replace that donut in your mind with an image of a favorite activity like dancing, hiking, knitting, etc. and employ all of your senses – the shapes, sounds, and/or colors associated with that activity. This helps you hit the "re-set button".
- 2. Delay.** Set a Timer for 30 minutes and keep yourself busy with a non-food activity/distraction.
- 3. Sniff!** Smell a non-food related scent like flowers (jasmine, lilac, etc.) to help reduce a food craving.
- 4. Chew gum.** Chew mint-flavored, sugarless gum to help squelch a food craving.
- 5. Get your sleep!** Get enough rest and you'll decrease the likelihood that you'll crave high-calorie, nutrient-poor food.
- 6. Get up and move!** A brisk walk (e.g., a 15 minute walk) is all it takes to help reduce a food craving.
- 7. Substitute.** When you're craving something sweet, try a piece of fresh fruit or some frozen yogurt. When you're craving something salty, try air-popped popcorn, baked pretzels, or a small handful of lightly salted nuts.
- 8. Drink water.** Since dehydration is often mistaken for hunger, have a large glass of water or some flavored seltzer water.
- 9. Select a small portion.** When you really want chocolate, choose 1 – 2 bite-sized pieces instead of the entire bag or the entire bar. If you really want those chips, only purchase 1 oz. bags or pre-portion your serving into a different container.
- 10. Eat enough protein and fiber and avoid skipping meals.** Include enough protein and fiber at every meal and/or snack to help you better manage your hunger throughout the day.