

# I CRAVE IT

Are you imagining it or is there a reason you just have to eat that favourite thing now?

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When you follow a very restrictive diet or cut out groups of foods, cravings can become very intense. This can lead to a vicious cycle of indulging, overeating and guilt. A diet that allows small amounts of foods you enjoy – even high-fat, high-calorie foods – will be easier to maintain. Here's what cravings might mean:



## CHOCOLATE

A craving could mean a need for magnesium.

**Try:** a cocoa drink (cocoa, water, fat-free milk and a small amount of sugar or a sweetener) or a snack of strawberries or orange slices dipped in a small amount of melted hot chocolate.  
**Other sources of magnesium:** nuts, seeds, legumes, bananas and avocados.



## SWEET

A craving could be linked to unregulated blood sugar levels.

**Try:** small regular meals and snacks every 3-4 hours.  
**Healthy sweet treats:** Fruit contain fructose (fruit sugar), but also provide you with antioxidants and other nutrients.



## BREAD/TOAST

Going low-carb or no-carb could leave you deficient in important vitamins and minerals.

**Try:** A regular intake of wholegrain (but low sugar) carbohydrate foods.  
**Carbohydrate options:** oats, wholewheat pasta and bread, brown rice, corn, sweet potatoes.



## COFFEE OR TEA

This could be linked to low energy levels.

**Try:** Have breakfast within 2 hours of waking up and regular, healthy meals and snacks throughout the day.  
**Other options:** While you could have 2-3 cups per day, replace the rest with decaffeinated coffee or tea, or herbal teas.



## CARBONATED DRINKS

Your body might be seeking hydration but these drinks are usually full of sugar and caffeine.

**Try:** Lite or diet or sugar-free fizzy drinks. Limit your intake to not more than 500ml per day.  
**Other options:** Make "fruit flavoured" waters by adding sliced fruits e.g. lemon, apple, raspberries, kiwi etc. to a jug of plain or sparkling water.



## OILY FOOD AND SNACKS SUCH AS SLAP CHIPS

Be sure you're getting a supply of healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats in your diet.

**Try:** avocados, raw nuts, seeds, olives, olive oil and nut butters.



## SALTY FOODS

It could be a lack of minerals in your diet or just a bad habit. If you grew up salting your food, it won't taste as good to you at first to skip the salt. However, taste buds do change.

**Try:** air-popped popcorn, oven-baked pretzels, raw nuts, oven-roasted chickpeas or lean/game bil-tong.



## CRUSHED ICE

A craving could be caused by low iron levels or anaemia. Although eating crushed ice isn't necessarily harmful, consider having your iron levels checked.



## CRAVINGS AFTER GIVING UP SMOKING

Your sense of smell and taste improves and this can lead to increased appetite and snacking. Opt for baby carrots, sugar-free gum or air-popped popcorn for healthier

snacks and look for other ways to keep busy during usual smoke breaks, like a brisk walk.



## PRE-MENSTRUAL CRAVINGS

Women often snack and then blame PMS. (For 8%-20% of women it can be severe, requiring medical treatment.)

**Try:** Calcium and vitamin D (in particular low-fat milk and yoghurts), vitamins B1 and B2 (from whole grain cereals, some meat, milk, and beans) and essential fatty acids. A supplement of evening primrose oil may also help.

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## COLD SORES

Cold sores are caused by a virus called herpes simplex. First infections are usually in childhood and are painful ulcers in the mouth accompanied by fever and enlarged glands. It subsides in three to six days without specific treatment. The virus then remains dormant and symptoms can reappear later. Subsequent attacks generally look like the typical cold sore.

## COMMON TRIGGERS

- Being overtired and run down
- Sunlight
- Menstruation
- Other bacterial or viral infections
- Emotional stress

Subsequent attacks present with lesions on the lips and surrounding skin. It starts with a tingling sensation followed by a red patch that develops into a blister. At this stage it's highly infectious to people who haven't been infected before and close contact with others especially children should be avoided.

The blisters form a yellow crust in a few days. It can take seven to 12 days to heal. Antibiotics don't help.

## TREATMENT

- Avoid known triggers.
- When tingling starts, ice and an application of an antiviral cream containing acyclovir can reduce the severity of the attack.
- Clean the area gently and apply an antiseptic cream or Vaseline to prevent cracking and further infection once crusts have formed.
- Antiviral medication may help prevent future attacks.

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