



Understanding Food Cravings

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Each of us, from time to time, has experienced a sudden urge for a particular food or drink. However, on occasion this particular urge becomes an intense craving, occurring on a daily basis and suddenly we are caught by the realization that we are being controlled by our body. Food cravings are there for a reason, they indicate a chemical imbalance which your body is trying to correct. Your body has a need, and it is trying to get your attention. Once you meet that need, the cravings will stop, if you don't the cravings become stronger and harder to control. There are many types of cravings each caused by a particular imbalance. By carefully evaluating your craving you can identify the cause and correct the imbalance.

Stress and the Sweet Tooth

In a world of busy schedules, we find ourselves in many stressful situations, good or bad, this stress drains your body of nutrients at a very high rate. In order to sustain long periods of stress and still feel good we must supplement nutritionally the vitamins and minerals used by our body under stress. Failure to do so creates cravings:

We crave **carbohydrates** for B-vitamins, **coffee** to jump start our adrenal glands, and **sugar** to give us energy to keep us going.

The end result, Low blood sugar - Resulting in the following symptoms (to name a few):

headaches	sudden fatigue	irritability
Insomnia	anxiety	depression
mood swings	shakiness	mental confusion

Beating the cravings: The following combination of formulas will help stop the cravings for coffee, sugar and carbohydrates, when brought on by stress and low blood sugar:

Nutri-Calm This high potency B-complex is in a base of calming herbs that support your nervous system, along with extra Vitamin C to support your adrenal glands.

Adrenal Support This specific combination of herbs, vitamins, enzymes, and minerals helps to strengthen and balance your adrenal glands. The adrenals are your stress glands, they help to keep minerals and blood sugar in balance. The herbs licorice root and schizandra are used in this formula because they help your body adapt to long term stress.

Sugar Reg This blend of herbs and minerals helps bring sugar metabolism back to normal and reduce the cravings for sweets and carbohydrates. When you overindulge in sweets for a period of several weeks, such as we do during the holidays, you will throw off your insulin production and blood sugar balance. This makes it harder and harder to resist tempting goodies all around us. The trace minerals chromium and zinc are quickly depleted.

Coffee kept you up? Too much coffee with or without caffeine along with chocolate and other goodies are going to put stress on the liver. If your liver is congested and sluggish, it can take up to 20 hours for the effects of caffeine to wear off in the body. When the liver becomes stressed we become irritable, edgy, are muscles become stiff and sore, headaches or nausea may develop. People tend to have difficulty falling asleep at night, and toss and turn throughout the night. When the liver is overloaded, you will wake up in the morning and feel very sluggish (like a hangover feeling). To help detoxify your liver I love the formula **Chinese Liver Balance TCM**. This formula combines traditional Chinese herbs to help the liver detoxify, relieve nervous tension, improve the function of the gallbladder and stomach, and release emotions attributed to congestion in the liver. I find the effects are further enhanced by adding the formula **Stress-J**. This formula combines the herbs, chamomile, passion flower, feverfew and hops to calm your irritated nervous system, relax tight muscles and help restore your sleep back to normal. It also contains marshmallow, fennel and chamomile to support the digestive process to help enhance liver function.

Diet Considerations:

Drink 2 quarts of water daily, this will help flush the body of toxins that irritate the nervous system. The addition of fresh squeezed lemon in your water will help to keep your blood sugar more stable between meals.

Start your morning out with a protein based breakfast: A high protein low carb breakfast will help to keep your blood sugar stable all morning, the protein provides amino acids which also help the body to think more clearly during times of stress. Suggestions: 2 hard boiled eggs with just one slice of whole grain toast, Protein bar such as the Zone bars, or Luna Bars, a piece of leftover chicken, cottage cheese, raw almonds and a slice of real cheese.

Have a mid morning and mid afternoon snack, the snack should either be a protein source like those listed under breakfast choices, raw vegetable plate (carrots, celery, tomatoes, etc.), or a piece of fresh fruit- limit your fruit to the lower carbohydrate fruits such as cantaloupe, strawberries, watermelon, grapefruit, oranges, peaches, plums, raspberries, and tangerines.

Add more fiber to your diet, fiber slows the absorption of sugar into your blood stream, it also helps you feel full sooner so it helps prevent overeating. Increasing fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans and lentils, all increase fiber in the diet. For supplements, I like to take **Fat Grabbers** with my meals.

Fat Grabbers combines psyllium and guar gum fibers along with chickweed and lecithin to emulsify fats. The result is increased fiber, along with fats and sugars being trapped in the fiber and eliminated from the body without being digested. Each 4 fat grabbers blocks about 100 calories of fat from a meal. This formula is also very helpful for lowering cholesterol levels.

Decrease intake of coffee and caffeine beverages.

The Salt Craver

Pretzels, chips, popcorn, ham, and bacon, all typically craved because of their salty taste. When your body becomes low in sodium it instinctively triggers a craving. The processed form of sodium in the above mentioned foods is not utilized well in the body; in fact it's harmful as it is not balanced properly with potassium and other trace minerals. Take a look at some food labels, the potassium level should be 2 parts to every one part of sodium. For instance 4 cups of PopSecret popcorn contains 300-400 mg. of sodium, but only 95 mg. of potassium. On the other hand one stalk of celery, which is a good source of natural sodium, contains 35mg. of sodium and 115mg. of potassium.

When your sodium levels are low, or off balance, you may experience some of the following symptoms:

Cravings for salty foods
Crying for no reason
Excessive perspiration
High blood pressure
Excess stomach acid

Loss of appetite on hot days, nausea
Sensitivity or allergies to almost everything
Irritable bowel, diarrhea
Dizziness when standing suddenly
Muscle weakness and cramping

What causes the imbalance?

High stress, and poor diet over a period of time creates weak adrenal glands.

Your adrenal glands help with your ability to handle stress. They also contribute to blood sugar balance, allergy control, sex drive, inflammation, and of course, sodium balance. When your adrenals become weak the hormone aldosterone secreted by the adrenal glands becomes off balance, this results in excessive sodium loss in the urine, as well as low potassium levels. The result is cravings for salty foods, along with many of the symptoms listed above.

Beat the cravings: The following supplements will help to restore adrenal function and balance sodium and potassium levels to stop the cravings for salty foods.

Adrenal Support This specific combination of herbs, vitamins, enzymes, and minerals helps to strengthen and balance your adrenal glands. The herbs licorice root and schizandra are used in this formula because they help your body adapt to long term stress.

Spirulina is a natural blue green algae is the perfect food to help stop the salt cravings. This super food is full of all the vitamins and minerals the body needs for good health. It is a good source of organic sodium which is the form that the body needs to function properly. Once you take in the natural form of sodium your body will quit craving the processed, useless table salt. I have found that by taking 6 capsules spirulina daily, for a couple of weeks, you can leave a bag of chips on the counter and you won't even open it!

Sincerely, Valerie Greguire, Certified Herbalist, Natural Health Consultant

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