

[IMAGE]

Managing Your Cravings—Limit the Snacks

By Julie T. Chen, MD

We frequently hear or read about how we should eat small meals throughout the day and that we should give into our cravings just a little bit so that we don't gorge later. I agree with this comment...but I also disagree. Please allow me to explain.

For some of my patients in my integrative medicine clinic in San Jose CA, they are unable to limit to just small bites or if they eat many small meals throughout the day, they just end up eating many big meals throughout the day. Therefore, for some people, giving into cravings or eating many small meals do not work because these people will just end up gorging at every opportunity of eating.

For those of you who know that you are in essence an all-or-nothing kind of person, avoidance may be key at the beginning...or if you try again later and you still can't eat in moderation, then avoidance may be a good idea always for the fatty and sugary or carb-heavy foods.

Cravings are difficult to describe as to where the origin of them comes from. Sometimes, cravings may occur from hormonal shifts or changes in neurotransmitters or from lack of sleep. Other times, it may be based out of our need for emotional comfort hence us craving foods from childhood or from events that remind us of good times.

cravings - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Regardless of why we are craving these foods, if the foods are not healthy and are further sabotaging your health and wellness, NOT giving in to your cravings is important. If your cravings lead you to over-consumption of unhealthy foods, you need a game plan on how to avoid triggers for these cravings.

Some common suggestions I give to my patients are to set up other forms of rewards for when you are feeling down. Perhaps, you can set up a money jar for every time you do something good for your health and that way when you are feeling down, instead of gorging on unhealthy foods, you can take the healthy money and treat yourself to a non-food related treat like a movie or manicure or pedicure.

Other ways to help curb cravings include, but are not limited to, exercise, talking to loved ones, taking a soothing bath or shower, snuggling under blankets to read a book you've been wanting to read, watching TV while keeping your hands busy with activities like knitting, and going for a stroll with friends.

For those of you who know that you can avoid gorging on unhealthy foods with small bites of a treat, allow yourself only one treat per day and that way, you won't run the risk of overeating small bites of many different treats...which in the end just ends up being a lot of excess snacks.

Practicing mindful eating and being conscientious about what you put into your mouth will help you greatly in making sure that you don't overeat and this helps you to truly savor and enjoy every bite of the food that you do end up eating. When you can truly savor your food, you get to the point of feeling satisfied quicker...and that will definitely help you keep the caloric intake low.

Dr. Julie T. Chen is board-certified in internal medicine and fellowship-trained and board-certified in integrative medicine. She has her own medical practice in San Jose, Calif. She is the medical director of corporation wellness at several Silicon Valley-based corporations, is on several medical expert panels of Web sites and nonprofit organizations, is a recurring monthly columnist for several national magazines, and has been featured in radio, newspaper, and magazine interviews. She incorporates various healing modalities into her practice including, but is not limited to, medical acupuncture, Chinese scalp acupuncture, clinical hypnotherapy, strain-counterstrain osteopathic manipulations, and biofeedback. To learn more, visit www.makinghealthyez.com.

Page printed from:

http://www.toyourhealth.com/mpacms/tyh/article.php?id=1738&no_paginate=true&no_b=true