

SOLUTIONS

## 3 foods that make you even more hungry

Find out why you're always hungry and how you can change your diet and lifestyle to keep yourself full longer.

13 October 2016 by Yuen Yi Ying



**PHOTOGRAPH: 123rf.com**

Do you reach for a snack, but end up feeling hungrier than before you ate? Does eating an apple leave you feeling unsatisfied and hungry for more? We've heard that enough times to wonder if certain foods might trigger a snack attack, where we want to devour everything in sight. To clear the air, we spoke to two experts, Jaclyn Reutens, the clinical dietitian at Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants, and Bonnie Rogers, the Nutrition Coach at The Nutrition Clinic, to find out their answers to three important questions.

## **Q1: Could some foods make us hungrier? What are they and why?**

**Jaclyn:** It is hard to prove that scientifically, so for now, we have to say it is anecdotal. What is factual is that your mind and certain hormones (ghrelin and leptin) can trigger or suppress hunger.

However, there are certain foods that are thought to trigger hunger due to the stimulation of gastric juices. They are usually “acidic” and sour in nature. Examples are sour plums, lemonade, lime juice, lemon juice, and alcohol. Other factors [that affect satiety include] ambience, how appetising the dish looks, smell, and even a person’s mood.

**Bonnie:** Some possible culprits include

### *Heavily processed foods like white bread, biscuits, pasta and cakes*

White flour has been stripped of the bran which contains a lot of fiber. It is essentially nutrient empty food that spikes your insulin levels, creating a roller coaster effect on your blood sugar. When your insulin levels start to drop, your body craves more sugary foods to try and rebalance your blood sugar levels. That's why we often feel like taking a nap after a pasta or pizza, or can never stop at one cookie. Unbalanced blood sugar levels = over eating.

### *Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) and artificial sweeteners*

There are a lot of studies that show that eating MSG can affect the satiety hormone, leptin, by interfering with the hypothalamus. Recent studies have shown that MSG can trigger a 40 per cent increase in appetite over time. It is really important to know what you are eating, especially if you are eating something regularly. When it comes to sweeteners your brain is tricked into thinking it is going to get a hit of energy, which doesn't come, so you start craving more and more sweet things as the day goes on. When it comes to artificial sweeteners, get rid of them. Read the ingredients of packaged goods to make sure they are not sneaking into your diet.

### *Sushi*

Sushi is a bit of a tricky one as it is often viewed as a healthy choice. It is important to

understand it is really a lot of rice. A portion of sushi is essentially like eating a few slices of white bread. It doesn't have much protein, fibre, or fat, so you enter into a similar situation created by eating processed foods. A better choice would be sashimi and avocado with a miso soup, which has a better balance of protein, carbohydrate, and fat.

## **Q2: What are some foods and factors that could help us feel fuller?**

**Jaclyn:** Foods that are high in fibre and have a high water content – such as wholemeal bread, brown rice, fresh fruits, and vegetables – fill your stomach up quicker and for a longer time. One serving of brown rice is about 200g (one Chinese rice bowl). [You could also have either of these:] two slices of wholemeal bread, a medium apple, 15 grapes, or 100g (3/4 cup) cooked vegetables.

High protein foods also tend to make you feel fuller. Examples are two eggs, beef or chicken that's about one and a half times the size of your palm, or one glass (200ml) of milk. In comparison with sugary foods – such as cakes, sweets, sweetened drinks – these keep you full for a longer amount of time.

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Most importantly, eat slowly. Take at least twenty minutes to finish your meal, not five minutes. Your stomach needs twenty minutes to send signals to your brain to say that it's full.

**Bonnie:** The key is to get a balance of carbohydrate, protein, and fat. Most snacks are high in carbohydrates, which surge our insulin levels and leave us hungry for more sugar and nutritionally empty foods soon after.

If you have unstable blood sugar levels, you may want to eat smaller portions and snacks every three to four hours to keep your blood sugar levels balanced. Once that happens, you can decrease the frequency of meals.

Some quick and balanced snack ideas are:

- Celery sticks and nut butter
- Boiled egg, tomato and avocado slices
- Banana and almonds
- A smoothie made with berries, coconut oil and sprouted brown rice protein powder
- One tablespoon of coconut oil and a handful of berries

### **Q3: What are some of the worst mistakes people make that cause them to feel hungry all the time?**

**Jaclyn:** When you feel hungry, you do get sleepy or tired. That's why you crave for sugary foods to give you a quick boost of energy. That's probably the worst thing you should reach out for. Sugary foods give you a spike in energy levels, followed by a sudden dip that leaves you craving for more sugar. Once you start on that sugar rush, it is hard to stop.

The second mistake is missing meals, especially breakfast. Skipping breakfast has been shown to increase intermittent hunger and mindless snacking for the rest of the day, and eating larger portions at main meals. Just because you don't feel hungry in the morning is not a good excuse to skip breakfast, unless you are prepared to gain unnecessary weight.

Skipping carbs at mealtimes thinking that you are being "healthy". Why should you skip carbs? Carbs are not bad. TOO MUCH carbs is bad and this goes the same for too much protein and too much fat. Just be sensible. You don't need to overdo anything, but in this case, under-do it. Missing carbs at mealtimes creates a need and sudden hunger one to two hours after the meal. That explains why those on a low carb diet reach for chocolate after a meal or reward themselves with a piece of cake or something sweet. It's ironic. You are better off eating carbohydrate-rich foods such as sweet potato, quinoa, rice, pasta or noodles at designated meal times. At least they are the good carbs.

**Bonnie:** Essentially, your body is hungry for nutrients, but if you feed it a lot of high sugar, heavily-processed nutrient-depleted food, your body will be constantly hungry

trying to find those missing nutrients. Add unbalanced blood sugar levels to the mix and your body will be craving food all day long just to stay awake and keep you from falling asleep at your desk.

If your blood sugar levels are unbalanced and you start missing meals, you are only adding fuel to the fire. Make sure you are eating within 30 minutes to an hour of waking up to start your metabolism and balance your blood sugar. Of course, what you choose at breakfast is key. If you're eating a muffin, croissant or toast (which is essentially dessert in terms of sugar content) you're setting yourself for energy dips (hunger and cravings) all day long. Choose from options like a low-sugar smoothie, eggs and vegetables, or a chia pudding.

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