

# App combines latest research to help users curb food cravings

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ImpulsePal uses a number of techniques to help users lose weight. Credit: University of Exeter

Experts are seeking volunteers to test a research-based app that aims to help users curb cravings for unhealthy foods and lose weight.

ImpulsePal is the brainchild of researchers at the University of Exeter. It uses a number of techniques to help users overcome the temptation to reach for unhealthy treats.

Functions include a brain training game, in which players have to tap healthy foods and avoid tapping unhealthy options. Evidence indicates this can help some people make better food choices in the real world, and make fatty and sugary snacks less appealing.

The app also includes an "urge-surfing" function using a mindfulness

technique. Based on the principle that cravings will pass if you ride them out, it features an audio recording of a guided meditation, with the aim that the craving subsides.

The app also features a "danger zone" function which can be programmed to remind them of their goal in specific locations at key times, such as passing the bakery in the morning. It also has an "emergency button" that users can hit when cravings are at their peak, which provides a "phone a friend" support function, gives advice or directs to a quick brain training game.

Samantha van Beurden, a PhD researcher at the University of Exeter Medical School, said: "Obesity is one of the greatest health challenges of our time, and we all know that being overweight makes us more susceptible to dangerous diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Yet, despite good intentions, many people still struggle to control their weight. With ImpulsePal, we have incorporated the latest research to provide a range of tools to help people curb [cravings](#) and eat more healthily. Everyone reacts differently to particular approaches. We hope that combining the best tools into a single app will mean users can find an approach to suit them at different points in their day.

"Taking part in our trial will help us test the app, and hopefully help us to make the app even better before we roll it out further."

To take part, [users](#) must have access to an Android phone or tablet, and a BMI (a measure of body fat) over 25 and live within travelling distance of Exeter. If you are interested in taking part, contact Email: [S.B.vanbeurden@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:S.B.vanbeurden@exeter.ac.uk)

**More information:** Find out more at the ImpulsePal website: [www.impulsepal.co.uk/](http://www.impulsepal.co.uk/)

Provided by University of Exeter

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