

Four strategies to cope with a food craving

April 30 2019, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—Sticking with a diet starts with having a plan that maps out meals and snacks based on foods that help you feel full longer. After all, if you feel satisfied, you'll be less likely to rummage through your

kitchen cabinets looking for treats.

But sometimes [cravings](#) can get the better of you. You might be tempted by the whiff of a bakery as you walk to work, want something sweet to cheer you up when you're down, or just reach for [food](#) because you're bored. The [answer](#) is to create a strategy for dealing with a craving as soon as you feel one coming on.

Pick a time when you're not hungry (perhaps right after a meal) to plan how you'll cope with a craving. Write down [actions](#) that you can take that fit with your lifestyle. This way, you'll enjoy the alternative course of action rather than feeling like you're punishing yourself. Your "best" action might be doing a crossword, picking up a crochet project or turning on dance music.

What if you feel a craving this very second? Here are four things you can do right now:

- **Phone a friend.** Sometimes calling in reinforcements can keep you on track or simply divert your attention from food. Try to find nonfood topics of conversation, and chat until the craving passes.
- **Drink a tall glass of water.** Being thirsty can feel like hunger. The American Council on Exercise suggests drinking one ounce of water for every two pounds of bodyweight over the course of each day.
- **Take a focused breathing break.** Use the next three minutes to center yourself—this is especially helpful if stress is the trigger for the craving. Close your eyes and picture a nonfood item or activity that makes you happy.
- **Consider a power nap.** Sometimes you're sleepy rather than hungry, and that can be a set-up for impulse eating. Chances are you'll wake feeling refreshed rather than ravenous. Follow the

nap with exercise rather than a snack.

More information: The American Council on Exercise has more tips [to help you stay on track with weight loss](#) and see results.

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