

FOOD CRAVINGS

By Jerry Simotas

"I have these overwhelming food cravings. I can diet and lose weight, but eventually, I give in to the foods I'm not supposed to eat. The cravings overtake me and I regain the weight I worked so hard to lose. I have no will-power."

These words are a common complaint of many health seekers who manage to shed pounds but cannot sustain their weight loss. In fact, many regain more pounds than they had lost and become understandably discouraged.

Food cravings are a subject rarely discussed by diet experts. Books advocate diet systems that are supposed to apply to everyone. They expect us to follow their one-size-fits-all regime with little regard to the forces that create our undeniable cravings.

I have news for the many who are faced with this dilemma. Your food cravings are not the problem. There are valid reasons for your natural food desires and neither your appetite nor your body is to blame. You are not weak-willed, but simply trying to satisfy your body's inevitable desire to establish harmony with itself. Overcoming cravings therefore, is not a matter of will power. They are what cause us to seek substances that cause weight-gain, poor energy, and ill health.

In holistic health, our objective is to understand the origin of physical and emotional imbalances. I have observed, in this regard, certain rules you may find helpful in your quest to stay fit: 1) food cravings always win 2) food cravings are not the problem 3) food cravings can be the solution.

Our body is an amazing biotechnical machine that is always seeking, in its wisdom, to restore balance and health. The vital question then becomes; what is causing these uncontrollable urges?

Although there are many factors which determine our food cravings, including gender, occupation, climate, relationships, ethnic background and exercise, I would like to address the most profound, our daily diet.

I classify foods according to their energetic components. Foods are either harmonious with nature or extreme and disharmonious. Extreme foods will create a condition that your body will always strive to ameliorate by seeking the opposite elements. Salted pretzels, for example, are served in taprooms so that you'll crave beer. The properties of salt and pretzels are highly contractive and create a craving for a cold, alcoholic beverage to quench that desire. Meat, among other foods, is also very contractive and often stimulates a craving for refined,

sweet foods like cookies, ice cream and cake.

More balanced foods, however, like beans, whole grains, vegetables and fruit, infuse a gentle, more enduring source of energy. These foods are rich in phytochemicals, fiber, minerals and vitamins and tend to fill the body's nutritional requirements rather than instigate excessive cravings, not to mention the wild energy swings and emotional imbalance wrought by rich foods. Refined, processed foods like sugar, leech nutrients from our body and leave us dissatisfied, craving more food. Extreme foods create physical and emotional discomfort and, of course, the myriad of diseases plaguing our culture. Obesity today has reached epidemic proportions.

Optimal health is achieved by eating nutritious, balanced foods while understanding our own individuality rather than following a strict formulaic diet that does not consider the many factors unique to each person. Some people for example, require more animal protein than others. This capacity is also determined by their work and environment. As a person who exercises daily, I do eat some meat, eggs, dairy, natural desserts and sometimes drink beer. But having A-type blood, I'm careful not to over-indulge lest I create a big-time craving for foods not in the best interest of my health and vitality.

My balanced approach to health and fitness (the result of years of study, observation and training) keeps my cravings satisfied, energy steady and my weight exactly where I like it. It is everyone's birthright to be energetic, healthy and in good shape. Do not feel guilty or discouraged by your cravings. Be gentle with yourself and the foods you eat. Understand your cravings and this wisdom will change your life.



Jerry Simotas is a graduate of the Institute of Integrative Nutrition and a member of the American

Association of Drugless Practitioners.
Contact: JerrySimotas@PhillyFit.com

