

Food cravings - do they mean something? by Tessa Jupp RN

We all know that when women are pregnant they get cravings for odd foods and no-one would dream of refusing to give them these foods - not that I had any peculiar craving when I was pregnant, but as a midwife I heard lots of these stories. Similarly it is well known that at certain times of the month women may crave chocolate.

Now we know that a craving for chocolate means we are low in magnesium, which results in aching muscles, tummy pain, cramps, hiccups, backaches and so on. In fact when hormones are changing we need more of some nutrients - like magnesium. Magnesium is still the safest treatment used for pre-eclampsia (raised blood pressure that can lead to "fits") in pregnancy. Helps with back pain too.

In the Nurses' Dictionary of my day, Vitamin B6 was listed for nausea and vomiting, as well as for morning sickness. This makes sense as B6 is needed for nerve function and the baby's nervous system is being developed in the first 3 months (when vomiting is usually worst) so draining the mother's B6 supplies. B6 is also needed for depression so taking B6 lessens likelihood of post-natal depression too.

We get B6 in protein foods, particularly red meat. Carnitine (also in red meat) is needed for B6 to work in the body. So everything is linked. Protein foods helped me manage my morning sickness and from low carnitine I was very tired.

So yes our Cravings are telling us something important.



Here is some of what is said about Cravings

Chocolate cravings - low in magnesium.

Many nutritionists estimate that over 80% of the population lacks enough magnesium. Eat foods high in magnesium, like nuts, seeds, fish, and leafy greens. And dark chocolate.

Sweet Foods - Need Vit C

Glucose and Vit C use the same absorption points in the gut. If we didn't have sweets, cakes, biscuits and sugary foods the only sweet food we could get would be **fruit which would give us the Vit C we need**. So eat a piece of fruit - one that is right for your blood group. If bordering on **diabetes** or are diabetic, take 3-4 **Chromium** 200mcg and **Biotin** 300mcg twice a day, equal amounts of each.

Salty foods - need minerals

You may be low on minerals - use a good quality Celtic sea salt which has 84 minerals in it.

Cravings for salty foods often mean stress may be taking a toll on your **adrenal glands**, which give us energy and help us to cope with stress. When you're overly stressed, your adrenal glands release cortisol, which can make you ravenous for high-fat, simple-carb foods that your body can use quickly for energy. Reduce your stress levels.

Meats, particularly red! - need amino acids

Meat is an energy food - provides carnitine, taurine, tyrosine and other amino acids which are needed for thyroid. Cravings for red meat may also indicate an iron deficiency. Often people crave burgers or steaks.

Raw meat (mince) or Ice (known as Pica)

Iron deficiency - anaemia can make your tongue and gums sore or cause a burning sensation in your mouth, which chewing ice can help to relieve. Beetroot also supplies an easily digested form of iron.

Loss of appetite for food (anorexia) - need Vit B1

We need B1, B6 and Zinc to make hydrochloric acid in the stomach to digest our meals. Have a teasp of lemon juice or apple cider vinegar with every meal till OK.

Loss of appetite for meat - need zinc

Not enough stomach acid to digest complex proteins. Have lemon juice or apple cider with your meals.

Avocados - need carnitine

Source of easy energy. Strengthens muscles.

Apple or Lemon juice - particularly in hot weather may mean you are low in potassium. Drink the water you boil your vegies in to get more potassium in the diet.

Ginger - need manganese

Craving ginger, ginger beer, ginger nut biscuits, gingerbread. Likely to be prone to tendon injuries, sprains, poor balance, bumping into doorways, dropping things, stiffness, tinnitus.

Craving bread, pasta, crackers, or other grain products

May mean you are low in the amino acid tryptophan. It is needed to make serotonin - 'happy hormone'. Lack leads to low mood, anxiety and problems sleeping. Research suggests increased blood sugar shuttles more tryptophan to the brain. Try increasing protein foods instead.

Milky, creamy foods, cheese or pizza cravings often indicate a B6 or a fatty acid deficiency. Research shows that both B6 and omega-3 fatty acids reduce inflammation and may help lower risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, arthritis, and other joint problems. Try walnuts, wild salmon, fish oil, coconut oil, avocado.

Dehydration - often hunger pangs are simply a cry for more water. It is estimated, 80% of people are dehydrated. Filtered or reverse osmosis water is lacking in the natural minerals found in spring water. You may need a pinch of celtic sea salt added to your water (not enough to taste). Some fruit juice (no added sugar) will restore electrolytes on a hot day too, when feeling washed out by the heat.

Cigarettes - need Vit B3

Nicotine in cigarettes is similar to the nicotinamide in B3 but you don't get B3 from smoking so addictive. Taking B3 ruins taste of cigarettes so may give up cigarettes or B3! Try chewing bits of B3 tablets every time crave a cigarette.