# How to curb your sweet tooth... by a nutritionist



Many people are familiar with the struggle to stop eating sweets... once they've started. If this habit becomes frequent, it can lead to extra pounds and associated health issues such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and others. There is a solution, however, that can help mitigate the urge for sugary treats.

Dr. Jurgita Varaeva, a scientific researcher in cardiovascular pathology and diet therapy at the Federal Research Centre for Nutrition, Biotechnology, and Food Safety, shared her insights on what one should consume to reduce the craving for sweets. According to her, the desire for something sweet is akin to addictions like alcohol, nicotine, or drugs. Consuming sweet foods stimulates the brain's pleasure centre much like these substances do. Many people find themselves reaching for sweets during times of stress or emotional tension, or when their blood glucose levels drop sharply.

But the craving for sweets can be controlled by incorporating certain foods into the diet. Key foods that can help curb the sweet tooth include:

**Whole Grains and Cereals:** Products such as whole grain breads, cereals, and porridges contain beneficial, slowly-digestible carbohydrates. Unlike fast-acting carbs found in sweets, these break down more slowly, causing a gradual increase in blood glucose which remains stable for longer periods. A sharp drop in glucose, the primary unit of energy, signals the brain that we are hungry, prompting cravings for glucose-rich foods.

**Fruits and Berries:** Though high in simple sugars, fruits and berries also contain antioxidants, dietary fibres, vitamins, and bioactive compounds. They provide not only the pleasure of sweetness but also substantial health benefits. For example, fruits like blueberries and strawberries are loaded with dietary fibres that mitigate the quick absorption of sugars.

**Sources of Tyrosine:** Foods such as fish, poultry, and some types of cheese are rich in tyrosine, which increases endorphin levels and reduces depression symptoms. These can be particularly helpful if sweet foods are often used to improve mood.

**Dark Chocolate:** While it can be considered a sweet, dark chocolate influences endorphin metabolism and could be beneficial if consumed in moderation.

**Soy and Quinoa:** Both contain N-acetylcysteine, a compound shown in animal studies to reduce the craving for sweets.

### Practical Measures to Manage Sweet Cravings

* Regular Eating Habits: Avoid long periods without food. Regular meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, and two snacks) help maintain stable blood glucose levels, reducing the urge for sweets. Consider convenient, wholesome options like those from Jake Food to keep you on track.
* Sleep and Physical Activity: Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule and staying physically active are vital. Lack of sleep can increase sugar cravings due to heightened stress hormone levels, while physical exercise helps improve emotional well-being and manage caloric intake.
* Medical Consultation: Persistent sugar cravings could be a symptom of insulin resistance. Insulin, released post-meal, helps distribute glucose to body cells. Lack of cellular sensitivity to insulin results in energy deprivation, prompting cravings for quick-energy sources like sweets. A doctor can order tests to identify insulin resistance and suggest appropriate treatments.

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