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body+soul

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HOW CAN I INDULGE MY SEXUAL APPETITE?

What to do when
your body is
sabotaging
your sex life



Hungry eyes?

From the look of food to the sound of cooking, we reveal the seven triggers to your cravings – and how you can control them

THE SEVEN TYPES OF *hunger*

Whether your tummy is rumbling or your mouth is watering, here's how to recognise your body's hunger cues and eat more mindfully

How many times have you reached for a handful of snacks at a party and munched through them without thinking, or ordered dessert because it looked so good, even though you were already full?

Eating is an immensely pleasurable activity and that's probably why most don't limit it only to when they're hungry. Instead, their hunger is also triggered by different senses — the smell of freshly baked bread, seeing the glossy icing on doughnuts or walking on the beach and suddenly craving hot, salty chips.

"Hunger is a very complex mechanism, but we do know that there are two basic aspects to it," explains gastroenterologist surgeon Dr Arun Dhir. "First, homeostatic hunger refers to the body trying to maintain its internal environment based on its need for nutrition, energy, micronutrients and calories. The second is hedonic hunger, which is driven by desire to satisfy emotional cravings."

There are many factors that underpin a person's relationship with food, and psychologist Sabina Read says you can explore emotional cravings and any unhelpful eating habits through mindfulness.

"There's nothing complicated or magical about mindful eating," she says. "However, many people have overridden a more intuitive and mindful approach to food due to busyness, unhelpful habits or low awareness of uncomfortable emotions. Mindful eating means fully attending to the physical and emotional experiences you feel before, during and after eating."

Your senses play an important part in how you experience hunger. The sight, smell, taste, mouth-feel and even the sound of food or cooking can all trigger your desire to eat. "If you start at the top of your body and work your way down, you can identify seven different types of hunger," says Dr Dhir. "By becoming aware of these, you can begin to eat mindfully, which reduces your chance of overeating, weight gain and compulsive eating."

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WORDS LINDY ALEXANDER

1 MIND HUNGER

Mind hunger is the inner voice that influences your eating habits. Modern society constantly bombards you with new diets, eating tips and nutritional advice, which can make it hard to recognise what your body truly needs. "Often your body isn't hungry but your mind perceives the need to eat as you're influenced by images on television, advertising or social media," says Dr Dhir. **Mindful eating tip:** It's natural to be curious and even influenced by popular nutrition advice, but tapping into your body's natural cues is the best way to satiate your mind hunger. If you're not sure if you're truly hungry, start with a glass of water. "Often your mind tells you that you're hungry when you're actually just thirsty," Dr Dhir says.

2 EYE HUNGER

Imagine there are two meals in front of you: both use the same ingredients, but one is presented beautifully and the other is plonked on your plate in a messy heap. Which would you prefer? The aesthetically pleasing one, right?

"Eye hunger is linked to the visual appearance of food," says Dr Dhir. "Your eyes hunger for appealing and tempting dishes. If you look at an apple compared to fairy floss, most people would prefer to look at, and eat the fairy floss."

Mindful eating tip: To satisfy eye hunger, take the time to arrange your food in an appealing way. Dr Dhir also warns against eating in front of screens. "Research has shown that people who watch television and eat at the same time tend to get distracted and risk overeating."

3 NOSE HUNGER

Think back to the last time you had a heavy cold and your nose was blocked up; your food was probably pretty tasteless. That's because your nose is one of the most important parts of your body when it comes to hunger and eating. But your nose can also trick you into thinking you're hungry. "Even if you've just eaten, you can still smell something delicious and want to eat," says Dr Dhir. "That's part of nose hunger."

Mindful eating tip: Before you dive in, take a moment to inhale deeply and savour the aroma of your food. Enjoy the scent and ask yourself if you're truly hungry. If you are, enjoying the scent of your food can help you become more mindful of what you're about to eat.

4 MOUTH HUNGER

Your mouth is primed to respond positively to a variety of flavours and textures, especially sweet or salty. This desire for sweet or salty tastes can keep you eating even when you're not hungry.

Mindful eating tip: "If you've got a sweet tooth like me, brush your teeth or rinse your mouth after you eat a piece of chocolate," advises Dr Dhir. "By introducing water, you're diluting the impact of the sugar and breaking the cycle of wanting more."

5 HEART HUNGER

This is when you eat to find comfort. "The heart is the seat of your emotions and emotional eating is a big issue for many people," says Dr Dhir. Eating to fill an emotional void or to avoid stress can lead to feelings of guilt, shame and unworthiness.

Mindful eating tip: The first step to being mindful of heart hunger is to acknowledge what you're really feeling. "Every emotion has its place, and no emotion is good or bad – it just is," says Read. "Attempting to quash or circuit-break any painful emotion with food is like slapping a Band-Aid on a wound."

Read suggests asking yourself: "If I'm not hungry, what else am I feeling?" Talking about your feelings with a friend or family member, writing them down and learning to identify, acknowledge and tolerate your emotions are all ways to combat heart hunger.

6 STOMACH HUNGER

Your tummy is rumbling and your energy levels have dropped. Time to eat? "Most probably," says Dr Dhir. "Your gut is the engine of life and most of the time the rumbling is letting you know it's time for food."

Mindful eating tip: Don't just rely on the rumbling to let you know you're hungry, though, as those noises can also be part of the digestive process. Before you eat, rank how hungry you are on a scale from one to 10 (one being ravenous and 10 you've eaten too much). If your hunger is five or over, you're probably not genuinely hungry, so wait a little while before eating. It's a good idea to check in half way through the meal and rate your hunger again.

7 CELLULAR HUNGER

"Your cells provide your body with energy and your cells need nutrients," says Dr Dhir. "If you cut out any of the three macronutrients (protein, carbohydrates and fat) entirely, your body will experience the consequences in its cells."

Mindful eating tip: Cellular hunger is the hardest to sense, but your body is very good at letting you know what to eat and when, like when you're unwell and hankering after clear soup. Learn to listen to it by paying attention to your cravings. At first, your mind may respond (pizza), but as you practise mindful eating, you'll notice you'll soon be able to pinpoint the nutrients your body really needs.



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TO EATING MINDFULLY

Physical hunger vs Hedonic hunger

- 1. Builds slowly
- 2. Felt below the neck
- 3. Associated with hunger pangs, low energy or irritability
- 4. You feel satisfied after you've eaten

- 1. Develops quickly
- 2. Originates above the neck
- 3. Doesn't go away when you're full
- 4. You may experience feelings of guilt or shame after eating