

however, considering we have a lower tolerance of sugar in the evenings and we are less likely to be active at night, that snacking results in an increased waist circumference and your MiH jeans feeling a tad snug. Decide upon an evening deadline to stop snacking and stick to it.

### REPLACE THE BAD WITH THE GOOD

'Cravings can certainly be avoided – if we eat real foods in the right quantities, we won't crave,' says nutritional therapist Amelia Freer (freernutrition.com). 'Cravings are mainly down to getting trapped on a blood sugar roller coaster: the more refined carbs and sugar you eat, the more your body craves them. When we eat junk foods, such as sugar and bad fats, our brain produces dopamine – the neurotransmitter that makes us feel pleasure, love, lust, passion, addiction. The more dopamine production is stimulated, the less we feel the effects, so we need to eat more to get the same feelings.'

### THE MAGIC LOLLIPOP

Usually, when something sounds too good to be true, it is. That said, scientists at the National University of Singapore have developed the

### BEWARE OF CARBS!

Here's yet another reason to lay off refined carbohydrates like bread, cake, pasta, pizza and crisps. The experts tell us that eating them leads to a quick spike in blood sugar, followed quickly by a brutal crash, which has us heading to the vending machine faster than you can say 'chocolate bar'.

The study was published in *The American Journal Of Clinical Nutrition* in June 2013. David Ludwig, the study's co-author and the director of the New Balance Foundation Obesity Prevention Center in Boston, said at the time, 'Refined carbohydrates seem to be able to provoke food cravings many hours after consumption. Limiting these foods could help overweight people avoid eating.'

'digital lollipop'. Its genius lies in its ability to activate the tongue's taste receptors with electrical currents to stimulate the sensation of salty, sweet, sour and bitter tastes. The result is a sated appetite and zero cravings. We'll be at the front of the queue when this one's released.

### CHANGE YOUR MINDSET

'Changing the way you think about food and curbing cravings is a process. All too often, people want immediate change. I always say, "Progress, not perfection." The best way to make changes is to start small. Eventually, if you are filling your body with healthy foods, you'll slowly start to prefer those to the unhealthy options,' says Kimberly Snyder, author and nutritionist (kimberlysnnyder.net).

### GET MOVING

We all know that exercise is good for us. But regular exercise will also banish those diet-wrecking cravings. A study published in March 2012's *Journal Of Applied Physiology* says that 60 minutes of moderate exercise alters appetite-related hormones, which, in turn, suppresses hunger and decreases the pleasure of food and the anticipation of your next snack. One hour's swimming, dancing or running will all burn calories too. Win-win.

### DE-STRESS

'Stress is one of the leading factors when it comes to cravings. It causes the release of excess cortisol by the adrenal glands, which increases the production of insulin. This leads to sugar depletion in the bloodstream, sending signals to the brain to replenish sugars – hence the sugar and starch cravings. Learn to relax and see the cravings vanish,' says Shabir Daya, in-house pharmacist at Victoria Health (victoriahealth.com).

### EAT PROTEIN

Protein deficiency contributes to sugar cravings as the body seeks out an energy hit. Ensuring a good trickle of protein throughout the day will help to maintain a good blood sugar

### GET YOUR ZZZs

Have you noticed that following a night of terrible sleep you tend to reach for sugary snacks? Researchers at UC Berkeley in the US used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to scan the brains of 23 adults both after a good night's sleep and a sleepless night. They found that lack of sleep impaired activity in the frontal lobe of the brain (this affects decision making) and, at the same time, they found increased activity in the part of the brain that responds to rewards. Ultimately, this means that if you are overtired, you're less likely to talk yourself out of that extra biscuit or two. Time for an early night!

level and keep your body fuelled.

Amelia Freer tells us, 'Protein keeps us feeling full and blood sugar levels stable. Try to ensure a portion at each meal – eggs at breakfast, salmon for lunch, grilled chicken for dinner. Chia seeds are a great source of protein and keep you full – add them to smoothies, soak them in milk or mix them with fruit for breakfast. Eating a variety of veg will also curb the cravings.'

### FILL UP

'Hunger is often a sign of thirst, so drink plenty of water at the first sign of cravings. I also recommend 10 Day Downsize supplements (10 Day Results, £27.50, victoriahealth.com). They contain fibres from the konjac root, which are known to make you feel fuller, and green tea, guarana and cayenne pepper to enhance metabolism,' says Shabir Daya.

### TAKE ACTION

'Make a list of real foods that you love – for example, apples, raspberries, avocados, rocket, peppers, chicken and cashew nuts. Add these healthy foods to your daily meals. Then choose one night a week to enjoy "bad" foods of your choice, so you aren't giving into them each day. You'll note a change in taste and not want the "bad" foods as often,' says Amelia Freer. ■