

## From Dr. Phil's 20/20 Diet Plan:

Seven tricks to combat fake hunger and cravings use them or let them inspire you to come up with new ones that work for you:

### 1. Slow down and chew each bite for 30 seconds

Studies indicate that obese people ingest their food quicker and chew their food less than slender people. This is certainly something I have observed with my overweight patients as well. Are you guilty of taking enormous bites chewing the food barely enough to swallow it and then immediately going for the next bite? I assure you there is no reward for eating the fastest or the most food in one sitting. From now on I want you to make a conscious effort to slow down take much smaller bites. Use a salad fork instead of a dinner fork to make it easier and spend an entire 30 seconds chewing each bite. Research shows that the extra chewing can actually lower your level of the hunger hormone ghrelin and boost your level of the appetite suppressing hormone cholecystinin. That's right; you can actually create a physiological response in your body that will keep you from overeating, all by slowing down and chewing longer.

### 2. Turn off the screens

You might think that your smartphone or tablet is your best friend, but did you know it could be causing you to eat more? That's right-a recent study published by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine found that people who were exposed to the type of blue light emitted by this kind of screen before and during an evening meal experienced an acute increase in hunger and insulin resistance. And that's not all; this blue light has also been shown to decrease overall sleepiness, and if you mess with your sleep patterns, you're setting yourself up for even more cases of the munchies the next day. So switch off your e-reader or smartphone near meal time or bedtime. If reading helps you wind down, opt instead for a good, old-fashioned hardcover or paperback book.

### 3. Revamp your sleep

Catching proper Z's is a vital aspect to weight loss, especially when you consider one randomized sleep study recently published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, which showed that people who sleep less than seven hours per night are predisposed to overeating. In fact, these sleep-deprived study participants consumed an average of nearly 300 calories more per day than those who got enough sleep, and many of those extra calories came from saturated fat. So make it a priority to get within the ideal range of seven to nine hours of sleep per night.

### 4. Drink the right stuff

Sometimes when we think we feel hungry we're actually confusing the signal for thirst with hunger, so it's a smart idea to try drinking a cup of water before reaching for something to eat. Plus developing research suggests that water may help increase thermogenesis, as scientists observed in one particular study. If you're not a big water drinker jazz it up with a little squeeze of lemon or go for the sparkling variety.

### 5. Brush your teeth

Have you ever noticed how bad food tastes if you eat right after you brush your teeth? Use that fact to your advantage and brush your teeth when you're feeling a weak moment coming on. Because you typically brush your teeth at times of the day when you won't be eating, your brain has an association between minty fresh breath and non-eating.

### 6. Call a supporter

Rely on the people to whom you are accountable. Call, text, or e-mail any or all of them for encouragement in the moments that you need it. That's what they're there for!

### 7. Accomplish a task

You probably know the times of day when you tend to have weak moments. It could be late at night after the kids go to bed, or maybe it's midafternoon or right after work. Prepare for those impulse moments, which most of us experience from four to seven times a day by having a list of quick tasks you could accomplish instead of giving in and eating. Think about it; there's always a bill to pay, laundry to fold, a car to wash, or an errand to run. Or you could even burn a few extra calories by doing 30 seconds of lunges or jumping jacks. As your concentration shifts to the task at hand, it will move away from the thoughts of food. Have some foresight and plan incompatible activities (something you can't do while eating) for those times of day.