

Ask Leyla: Why am I craving fat?



Q: I used to eat myself into a sugar coma most days of the week, so it came as a pleasant surprise when I did not experience withdrawal symptoms from significantly decreasing my total carbohydrate intake.

However, over the past 3-4 months, I have intense cravings for and indulge in massive amounts (3 cups or more) of high-fat foods—especially nuts, seeds, and cheese. Why is this happening? What can I do?

A: I applaud you in your efforts to lower your refined carbohydrate intake.

What you are experiencing now is a reaction to “trigger” foods. Nuts and seeds often take the place of high carb snacks in a low carb diet. These foods however can “trigger” cravings in susceptible individuals. Cheese is another trigger food because the casein in dairy hits our opioid circuitry in the brain, the same way sugar did for you before—inducing the “sugar coma” you describe so well. Dairy is known to have eight distinct “exorphins.” Exorphins behave like endorphins—give us a pleasant ‘high.’ The best way to deal with this is to stop eating these foods altogether for a few weeks.

Over time, the cravings will subside. You can help this along by having good quality protein at every meal and a snack as required if you’re still hungry. Snacks such as a couple of tablespoons of shrimp or salmon salad, half an avocado or a crudité platter with some guacamole, a chicken drumstick, a hardboiled egg or any leftovers from your previous meal will help keep cravings at bay. Adding [chromium](#) to your supplement regimen will help further stabilize your blood sugar.

If you’re still stuck, try taking [L-glutamine capsules](#). L-glutamine has been shown to help reduce cravings.