

4. You Feel Great!

Does a version of this scenario sound familiar? You get good news at work—a promotion, a killer review, a new client. You're excited, happy and confident, and ready to celebrate. And nothing quite says "reward" like highly palatable foods, says Cynthia Bulik, Ph.D., professor of psychiatry and nutrition at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and author of *Crave, Binge Control*, and other books on binge eating. Stress and negative emotions ramp up cravings, but the opposite does, too. "Lots of men, especially, say that positive emotions trigger binge eating," Bulik says. Yep, you can't win.

5. You Need Energy—STAT

Your body stores sugar as glycogen, which it needs for energy. If you're on a low-carb diet and your glycogen reserves are dwindling, the body can crave foods that deliver the fastest-possible hit of energy—quick-digesting carbs like bread, pasta, cookies, muffins, Cohen says. Instead of going super-low-carb or no-carb, swap refined carbs for complex ones like whole grains, beans and produce.

6. Blame Your Sweet (or Carb) Tooth

Eating a lot of junk carbs can send your blood glucose levels on a roller coaster ride, leading to a vicious cycle of craving and caving. Say your stomach is rumbling and you eat a bagel or a bag of Skittles, which your body breaks down in lightening speed. Sugar floods your bloodstream and you get a quick flash of energy—that's the sugar high—but your body tries to burn through the sugar all at once. Your pancreas pumps out insulin to deal with the influx, and while some of the sugar gets stored for energy, the rest gets stored as fat. Then glucose levels plummet because there's nothing left in your tank. That's the sugar low, Cohen says, and it dumps you back where you started: hungry and craving foods that will give you another high.

7. You're Buzzed

The term beer goggles can apply to food, too. People use their cognitive controls to watch what and how much they eat (as they do with other behavior), but booze squelches those controls. The result: "Alcohol disinhibits appetite," Bulik says. "When you're sober, you might say to yourself, 'It's wise to only have a few chips.' But when you're drinking, that could turn into 'Whatever, let's party!'" What's more, new research in the journal *Obesity* shows that drinking enhances your brain's response to food smells—it makes you more sensitive to a delectable aroma, which can shift cravings into overdrive.

8. You Eat With Your Eyes and Nose, Too

Food porn can remind you of just how incredible a particular food tastes and makes you feel. "Pictures can be mouth-watering, and mouth-watering stimulates the desire to eat," Bulik says. In fact, compared to photos of non-edible items, pics of hamburgers, cookies and cakes increased hunger by 19 percent and the desire for sweet and savory treats by 21 and 14 percent, respectively—plus, they stimulated areas of the brain linked to reward, according to a study from the [University of Southern California](#). As for your sense of smell? "When it comes to cravings, we are often led by our noses," Bulik says. "Pumping the smell of popcorn into the movie theater is going to stimulate you to buy and eat."

9. You're no different than Pavlov's dogs

If you grew up eating dessert or you make a habit of always grabbing a donut during your 10 a.m. meeting, then chances are high that breaking your routine will have you craving a treat. People can become conditioned to want sweets at certain times, Bulik says. Ditto after long periods of not eating. If you wolf down a candy bar when you're hungry, it gives your brain a quick hit of sugar. "That sets up a conditioning experience that pairs 'relief from intense hunger' with that high-sugar food," she says. Boom: You've just upped the chances that the next time you're famished, you'd sell your watch for a candy bar.

10. You're addicted

Eating sugar releases dopamine, the same brain chemical cocaine triggers. Eat enough of it and changes in your brain cause you to get hooked, which can lead to addict-like cravings and even withdrawal, according to a paper in *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*.