



sweet tooth SWAPS

Chocolates, cakes and biscuits seem to taste better on cold winter days. **Monica Videnieks** reports.

Perhaps this will convince you to skip that sweet treat today: Spring is just six weeks away. Sweet snacks, especially on cold winter nights, seem to taste even better but sugar cravings can be more than just willpower falling by the wayside. Some health experts believe sugar cravings can indicate deficiencies in certain nutrients, while others say that consistently craving sweet food, like chocolates, may be triggered by a withdrawal of the food's feelgood chemical ingredients like phenylethylamine, a caffeine-like stimulant.

Feeling sad or stressed can also send you heading to the confectionery machine. Delicious news for anyone who likes a sugar treat, however, is that

there are relatively simple ways to beat sugar cravings.

Australian Dietitians Association spokeswoman Denise Griffiths said many people had a sweet craving immediately after dinner.

"Instead of opening up a chocolate, having some lollies or eating a sweet biscuit, why not try a bowl of tinned fruit in natural juices and low-fat yoghurt," Ms Griffiths said. "This way you are getting a sweet fix but it's not bad choice."

Ms Griffiths said if sweet cravings struck at the same time of the day, try to plan for it. "Have some crackers or a piece of fruit instead," she said. Or get up and do something different to distract you from the urge.

"Having ready-made, healthy and

tasty options is the best way to make good food choices when the sugar craving hits and if you're not sure what to choose, an accredited, practising dietitian can assist you in making changes to your diet and can offer advice on quick, easy and nutritious snack alternatives."

Griffith University psychologist Peta Stapleton last year released findings of a study that found a form of acupuncture

'Instead of a sweet biscuit, why not try tinned fruit in natural juices and yoghurt?'

was effective in beating food cravings, especially for "comfort foods" like chocolate, chips, cakes and sugary soft drinks. The acupuncture stimulates pressure points without needles.

"Psychological acupuncture can help override our emotional and physiological responses to different stimuli, including food," Dr Stapleton said.

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NEED A SUGAR FIX QUICKLY?

Try these options instead.



- **Toast or crumpets** with jam, honey or ricotta cheese
- **Fruit smoothie** with low-fat milk, yoghurt and blended fresh fruit
- Try making a **savoury muffin** with grated carrot and zucchini
- Heat **pita bread** in the oven until crispy and serve with some **low-fat dip**
- Cut **fresh fruit**, such as pears, kiwifruit, strawberries, mandarins, grapes, watermelon and rockmelon, into bite-sized chunks
- A handful of raw, **unsalted nuts**
 - A tub of low-fat **yoghurt**
 - Try raisin **toast** with a thin spread of jam
 - Chop up **carrots, celery and capsicum** into sticks with tomato salsa dip





WALK AWAY

Craving something sweet?
Distract yourself by doing something else; drink a glass of water or make a phone call. Most cravings only last about 15 minutes.

GET ACTIVE

Exercise releases endorphins, the feel-good hormones that help to reduce cravings for sweet foods. Plus, after exercise you're more likely to want water than lollies.