

A close-up photograph of a white ceramic coffee cup filled with a frothy latte, topped with a dusting of brown powder. The cup sits on a matching white saucer. In the foreground, a white chocolate bar wrapper is partially visible, featuring the text "DARK CHOCOLATE 70% COCOA" and "Sweet & Rich". The background is a warm, wooden surface.

7 days, so many ways to cut cravings and stop snacking –for good!

Whether you just have to have a dose of caffeine to get going in the morning, or start to reach for a choccie bar mid afternoon because dinner is still hours away, experiencing peaks and troughs in energy can leave you feeling sluggish and out of sorts. I've put together a series of easy steps that work together to create a 7-day programme to help you curb those cravings, stop snacking and start to take back control of what you are eating. You won't feel like you are missing out because all the ideas within these pages are delicious and easy to implement, but by the end of the week, your energy levels and sense of wellbeing should start to shift....in the right direction! Each day, a new habit builds on what has gone before so you can see what works best for you and start implementing them one by one as time goes on – as fast or as slowly as you like. So you set the pace and you're in charge! Good Luck

Day 1..... stay hydrated

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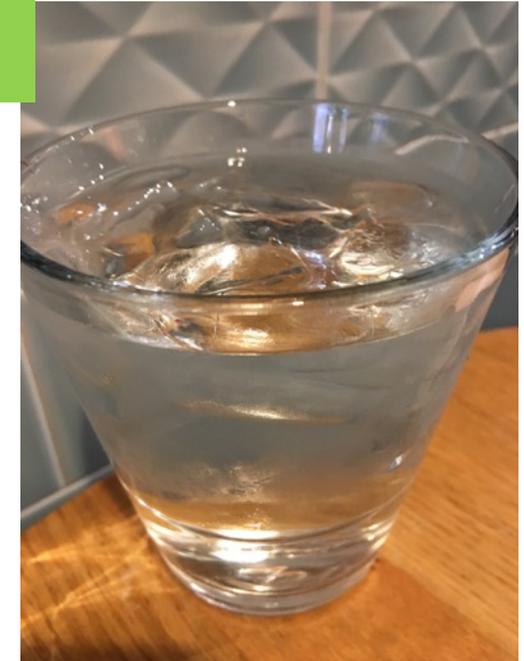
Being dehydrated can leave you feeling tired, lethargic and lacking motivation, which can then cause you to reach for caffeine or sugar in an effort to 'keep going'. This often results in energy highs and lows and with that, cravings. Dehydration also causes the sugar in the blood to become more concentrated. Drink a glass of water first thing every morning – it will help to fire up your metabolism after a night's sleep and will encourage your body to get rid of waste products that have accumulated.

Aim to drink around 6-8 glasses of water per day – it's fine to count soup, herbal teas and unsweetened, non-fizzy soft drinks in that total. You'll need more if exercising heavily, or if it's hot; less if you have a smaller frame and weigh less.

One study found that increased water intake was linked to improved short-term memory and an increase in visual attentiveness in long-distance runners and walkers.¹ Lack of fluid was found to negatively impact alertness and calmness and induce tiredness, anxiety and confusion among healthy young women in another study.²

1. Benefer MD, Corfe BM, Russell JM, Short R, Barker ME. Water intake and post-exercise cognitive performance: an observational study of long-distance walkers and runners. *Eur J Nutr.* 2012 May 11.

2. Armstrong LE, Ganio MS, Casa DJ, et al. Mild dehydration affects mood in healthy young women. *J Nutr.* 2012 Feb;142(2):382–388



Make sure any portable water bottles you use are BPA free. BPA stands for bisphenol A, a chemical used in the manufacture of some plastics and resins for the last 50 years. Some research has shown that BPA can increase blood pressure and may cause health issues for unborn babies and children. Look for containers labelled BPA-free, choose glass containers instead and check with plastics labelled with recycle codes 3 or 7 as they may be made with BPA. Also don't drink water out of plastic bottles that have been left to lie in the sun - on the beach or in the back of a car, for example - as the BPA can start to leach out into the water and will have to be processed by your body.

Day 2 eat protein for breakfast

Everyone's different – while some people like to eat a big breakfast or brunch to keep them going until later in the day, others can't face food first thing, preferring to have a smoothie or shake then perhaps a snack mid-morning. It's important – and absolutely fine - to do whatever suits you and your lifestyle, but there is one rule of thumb that's worth bearing in mind when it comes to breakfast. Whatever you like to eat and when, always make sure that breakfast includes protein rather than just carbohydrates. Traditional morning fare, such as cereal or toast with jam can cause blood sugar levels to rise initially but then, as the body produces insulin to deal with the sugar in your system, you can end up feeling hungry and grumpy as your blood sugar levels slump. Not only that, but the body will use the carbohydrates for fuel, instead of using up the body's fat stores for energy.



Shakes and smoothies can be made by blending nut or plant milks with frozen fruit and veg then adding a sprinkling of ginger, nutmeg or cinnamon and organic, natural Greek yogurt. Drink immediately or take with you for later.

As well as being a rich source of protein, eggs contain vitamins A, B6, B12, D and iron. You can ensure the iron is absorbed more efficiently by the body by eating a source of vitamin C at the same time (try citrus fruits, berries or orange juice for example), and avoiding tannins. So don't drink tea at the same time – have that cuppa later.



Add extra veg to eggs as you work towards at least five a day– try serving a shop bought Spanish style omelette of peppers, onions and potatoes with plum tomatoes roasted and drizzled with olive oil.

Eggs contain lutein and zeaxanthin. Studies carried out linked high levels of these carotenoids in the body with better vision.

Day 3 include healthy fats at every meal

Fats are one area of nutrition where there is lots of confusion. Fats to avoid include trans fats – created by a process that adds hydrogen to vegetable oils, this makes it solid at room temperature. Found in shop bought baked foods such as pies, pastries and biscuits, it gives food a longer shelf life. Low-fat foods are also best avoided, because the fat that's been removed has been replaced with sugar to make it taste better. So rather than a low fat yogurt, it's more nutritious to opt for Greek-style full fat organic which is full of live bacteria to support gut health. Food to focus on include those rich in Omega-3 and Monounsaturated fat. Here are a few ideas to try – incorporate them in meals or snacks during the day to keep energy levels stable.



Nuts and seeds make a satisfying snack and are a great source of protein and fibre as well as monounsaturated fats. They can help to support the immune system, maintain healthy cholesterol and control blood sugar levels. Soaking them makes them easier to digest.

Avocados, olives and olive oil are also a rich source of heart-healthy monounsaturates. They can also increase the absorption of fat soluble vitamins A, D, K and E.

Oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, sardines, trout and anchovies are rich in Omega-3 which helps to support eye health, mood and heart function.

Day 4 increase the fibre in your diet

Vegetables and legumes such as peas, chickpeas, and beans release energy slowly. Soluble fibre from oats combined with protein from nuts or nut butter can make a healthy breakfast that keeps you going all morning, helping to prevent snacking and grazing. Reducing carbohydrate intake to just a couple of small portions per day – and making sure these are wholegrain, 'full of fibre' varieties is another way to improve the body's tolerance to glucose. Look to eat most of your daily carb intake from veg.



Batch cook soups and stews and freeze portions to enjoy later in the week. Choose pasta made from red lentils, chickpeas or quinoa rather than wheat – it contains more fibre, vitamins and minerals and is tastier, too!

Day 5 plan ahead

1. Raid the fridge for food that you can take to work for lunch (last night's leftovers; a portion of soup or stew in the freezer; some fruit, nuts or dips, for example).
2. Take some fresh, raw veg to crunch on – or buy some on the way to keep up both your motivation and the variety in your diet. Diversity is key when it comes to diet – it keeps the bacteria in our gut happy and well fed, which in turn helps to support overall health and wellbeing.
3. Eat foods rich in Chromium (nuts, egg yolks, green beans and broccoli) and Magnesium (dark, leafy green veggies, fish, bananas and avocados) as both may contribute to healthy blood sugar control.
4. Dress salads with apple cider vinegar, or drink it diluted with water – it can help reduce cravings and improve the way your body responds to sugars and starchy foods, by slowing down absorption.
5. Choose 'low glycaemic load (GL)' foods – these have a lot less impact on sugar levels. Beans, eggs, non-starchy vegetables, wholegrains, meat and eggs don't spike blood sugar in the way that high GL foods such as cakes, biscuits, pies, pastries and white bread will. High GL foods release energy to the body more quickly, but they leave you feeling hungry again sooner and you'll be tempted to eat more.

Choose organic apple cider vinegar and drink it through a straw to protect tooth enamel., unless using it on salad



Apples or pears spread with nut butter or crunchy sweet peppers dipped in houmous both make healthy snacks and the addition of protein will slow down the release of sugar, keeping you feeling fuller for longer

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Day 6 exercise everyday (preferably in nature)

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All sorts of factors can affect the body's ability to maintain the stable blood sugar levels we need to prevent energy slumps, cravings and feelings of tiredness. Hormonal fluctuations brought on by illness, emotional upset, the age and stage you're at or even a hot day can all affect blood sugar but taking some sort of exercise can help support your body's ability to maintain them more evenly, helping to keep you energised.

Muscles use glucose, so exercise can help to lower blood sugar levels while also ensuring the body uses insulin more efficiently. Insulin is a hormone designed to prevent blood sugar getting too high or low by enabling the body to use the glucose found in carbohydrate-rich food for energy. Production of insulin is regulated by blood sugar and also impacts how efficient the breakdown of fat and protein in the diet is. Very intense exercise can trigger a rise in blood sugar, because stress hormones can cause the liver to release extra sugar into the blood.

Spending time in the fresh air also helps to ensure better quality sleep at night – lack of quality shut-eye can lead to increased appetite, snacking and weight gain.

Day 7..... Cut down on caffeine

...or chocolate, or sugar – whatever it is you are craving. Here are some alternatives you might like to try – even just alternating will instantly cut your intake in half!

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Choose fruit or herbal teas (hot or chilled) and weak green tea. Available in a variety of flavours – think salted caramel, lemon, fruits of the forest or mango and lychee to name a few, it's rich in antioxidants, which support the body's defences. It also contains some caffeine so don't drink it before bedtime – earlier in the day is fine and avoid letting it 'stew' as it will taste bitter.

Cinnamon slows the absorption of carbs after a meal to help prevent blood sugar spikes after eating. Add a teaspoon per day to yogurt or nut milk drinks. Nutmeg and ginger have a similar effect.

Early morning is actually the worst time to have a coffee! Drinking it soon after waking is counterproductive, because firstly, you won't be getting the full effect of the caffeine boost to your system and secondly, you'll start to build up tolerance for it - which means you'll need more and more to achieve the same buzz! Try having a cup mid morning so you are not relying on it to get you up and around in the morning.

Dates stuffed with nut butter, then chilled and dipped in dark chocolate make a sweet, satisfying treat.

Try replacing milk chocolate or sugary, energy bars with a square or two of very good quality, dark chocolate. It's usually difficult to eat as much in one sitting and it also contains soluble fibre and minerals iron, magnesium, copper and zinc as well as antioxidants, which are thought to be supportive to health.

But what if you are still struggling with those cravings?

Hopefully, the ideas contained within this ebook will have set you off down the right road to feeling more energised and reducing cravings. Hidden sugar is found in lots of foods – from baked beans to ready meals, soups to sauces, even condiments and cocktails. Low fat foods that are marketed as 'healthy' can be one of the biggest sources – with sugar or sweetener added to replace the fat. What happens is that over time, our bodies start to be tricked, with the spike then accompanying 'crash' in blood sugar levels that we can experience after eating sugary foods just serving to make us want more of it. There can also be other reasons as to why you are experiencing cravings, as well as diet, including:

- *Sluggish digestion –this can be due to low levels of beneficial gut bacteria, fungal overgrowth or leaky gut syndrome which can result in nutrient malabsorption which may make cravings worse.
- *Hormonal imbalances – at certain times of our lives, our bodies are more sensitive and crave sugar to 'keep going'.
- *Stress – it's often difficult to tell the difference between hunger pangs or needing to eat for comfort, particularly when faced with the routine, ongoing stresses of life on a daily basis.

That's where I can help. As a Nutritional Therapist, I have supported many clients over the course of my career, using personalised nutrition to help them feel more energised, healthier and happier. Contact me today by email at info@vivavitaenutrition.co.uk or by phone on (07930) 247177 to book a free call and find out how I can help you to start feeling fabulous again! Good Luck, *Sally*

