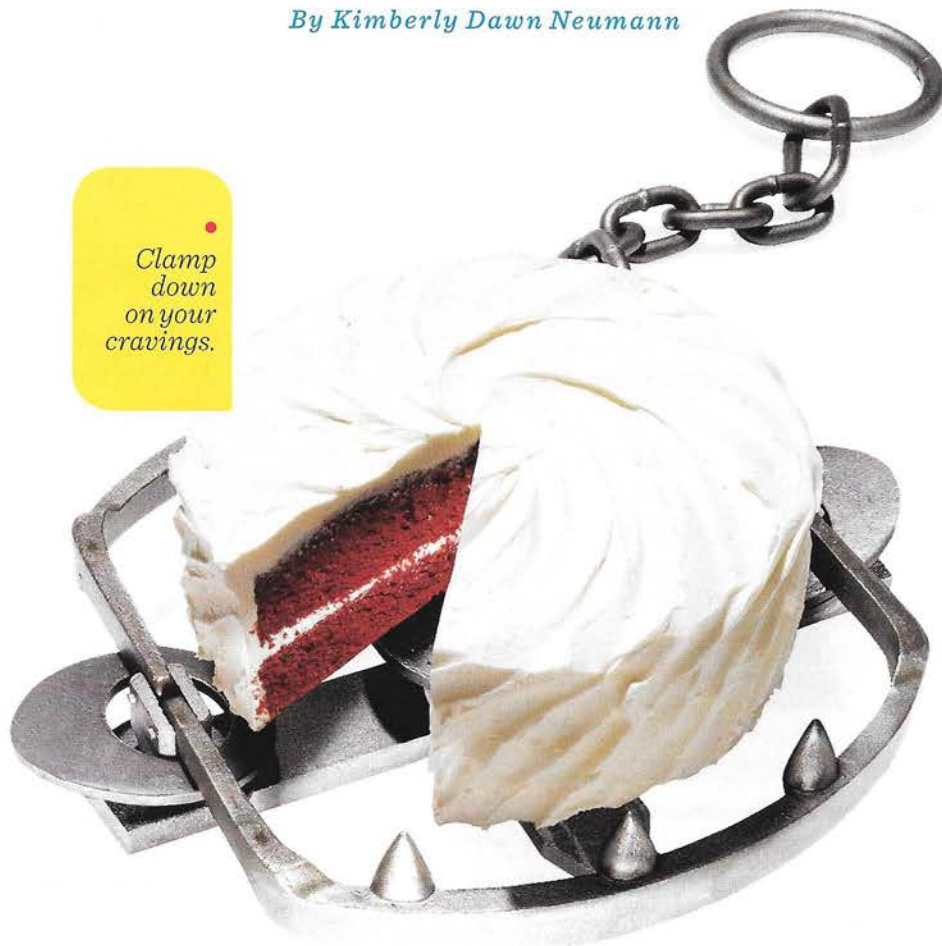


Outwit Temptation

Research shows you're more prone to cave to cravings during certain moments, derailing weight loss. But with this advice, your willpower can prevail around the clock

By Kimberly Dawn Neumann

Clamp down on your cravings.




TEMPTATION TIME Lunch

 The likelihood of a midday feeding frenzy increases if you haven't eaten since the cup of coffee you called breakfast. "Many women skip breakfast because they think it's a good way to save kilojoules, or because they're not hungry in the morning. The problem comes when hunger strikes, temptation is elevated and you start snacking on easily available food from the vending machine or shop: rusks, muffins, biscuits, chocolates, chips and sweets," says Joburg-based dietician Ria Catsicas. **STAY STRONG:** Even if you're not skipping breakfast, you may be skimping on what you need nutritionally to power through until lunch: namely protein, which tends to be digested more slowly and, therefore, keeps you fuller for longer. Women who do load up on the nutrient at breakfast (about 20 to 40g) are less hungry throughout the morning and consume fewer kilojoules during lunch, according to US research.

Increase your early-morning intake: have your morning cereal with Greek yoghurt, parfait-style; add a tablespoon of nut butter to your smoothie; make oats with low-fat milk instead of water and top them with a quarter cup of nuts. If you don't have the time or desire to eat a lot first thing, have a healthy mid-morning snack (when your appetite feels like a five out of 10 on the hunger scale – not ravenous). Try a quarter cup of trail mix or 28g cheese on wholewheat crackers.

TEMPTATION TIME The afternoon lull

 If you feel as though you hit a mental and physical wall every day between 2pm and 6pm, you're not alone. A likely explanation: according to the US Sleep Foundation, your body experiences a natural dip in energy in the early afternoon (the time depends on your individual sleep habits). As the energy you got from lunch begins to wear off,

You probably know timing is everything when it comes to the stock market, booking plane tickets and photobombing. It could make a big difference in your diet too, according to a study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. One consistent finding of the study: the moments we're prone to dietary seduction increase as the day goes on.

"Most of the time, people are very disciplined, but everyone has occasions when they let their guard down," says Vince Han, founder of the interactive weight-loss coaching company that analysed the results. Read on to discover the four times you're most at risk for giving in and how to stay strong.

you may start to feel restless and head to the fridge for a quick snack lift. Not so coincidentally, this may also be the first time you've left your desk since lunch (if you even left it then). It may be more about needing a break than needing food. "We think eating something will lift our energy levels, but, unless our blood-glucose level is low, the best bet is to take a break and rest with your fave cup of tea," explains Catsicas. **STAY STRONG:** Learn to recognise the difference between true hunger and just a desire to recharge. When you have the urge to snack, pop over to a colleague's office for a chat first. If that doesn't distract you after five minutes, you may be in need of food. Even then, implement a no-eating-at-your-desk rule. A US study found that people who ate while multitasking at their computers felt less full afterwards and later ate twice as many snacks as those who weren't distracted, because they "forgot" about the multitasking meal.

TEMPTATION TIME

The after-dinner hour



You'd think that if there were a time you'd be free of cravings, it would be immediately after a meal, right? Not so fast: study respondents said their urge to eat was actually greater post-dinner. Of course, that urge generally isn't for another helping of broccoli. It's what researchers call "hedonic hunger", or pleasure-motivated eating that activates the body's chemical reward system, triggering the release of feel-good hormones that can make us want more of the high-fat, high-sugar items that caused that reaction. **STAY STRONG:** In this case, you need to walk away – literally – from temptation. UK researchers found that walking for just 15 minutes can seriously reduce cravings for chocolate and reduce actual consumption by 50 percent. What's more,

the cravings were reduced not only during the walk, but for 10 minutes afterwards (giving you renewed willpower for almost 30 minutes, which could be enough to get you out of the danger zone). "The crucial moments we identified in our study did tend to be short-term occurrences," says Han. So, typically, if you can wait out a craving for, say, 10 minutes, it will most likely pass.

TEMPTATION TIME

Before turning in



The siren call of leftover pizza or cake in the fridge during the wee hours is responsible for many a diet derailment and, sure enough, nearly one-fifth of the study's make-or-break moments occurred at night. Research published in the journal *Obesity* may help explain why: there's evidence that our body's internal clock may be programmed to crave sugary, salty and starchy foods in the evenings around 8pm. One

theory: this tendency helped our ancestors survive food scarcity by encouraging them to eat larger, more kilojoule-dense meals prior to sleep, a long fasting period. Now that a nighttime snack is only as far away as the kitchen, that urge is doing more to harm us than help us. **STAY STRONG:** When people are trying to exert self-control, they're just as likely to default to a good habit as a bad one – as long as it's, well, actually a habit, according to the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. So, if the opening credits for *Vikings* automatically send you to the cupboard for chips, try changing your p.m. routine. Make a ritual of brewing a cup of tea or creating your own flavoured water (just add citrus or cucumber slices). Or Han suggests brushing your teeth... with a mega-minty toothpaste. Gargling with mouthwash works too. Nothing sweet or salty tastes the same after you've doused your taste buds in "clean". ■

Indulge in some 'Me Time' and WIN!

A comfy couch and a great book,
a nibble of dark chocolate,
a deep hot bath with loads of candles

– we all have that one indulgence that
gets us through the day



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