

# TOTAL **HEALTH** NEWSLETTER



**WINNIE CO**  
BSc Food and Nutrition

A new year is a new beginning. January is often the time we make new plans and resolutions, such as eating healthier or losing weight. However, sticking with these good intentions is not easy - our effort often does not last long when we meet our greatest nemesis - food cravings, the intense desire to eat a certain food right away. These foods are usually highly palatable, and processed, containing high amounts of fat, sugar and sodium. Examples include cheese, potato chips, cookies, and cakes, just to name a few.

People often blame these food cravings on bad eating habits, sweet tooth, or lack of self-control. While these may be true to a certain extent, there are neurobiological reasons why we struggle to stop at "just one". According to scientists, the regulation of food intake is actually affected by both homeostatic and hedonic factors<sup>1</sup>. The former are related to how body monitors energy balance and nutritional need by increasing the desire to eat when the body lacks energy or certain nutrient. In contrast, the latter are considered unrelated to nutritional or energy requirements, but are related to the brain's reward system instead. The highly palatable food triggers the release of dopamine, serotonin and endogenous opioids<sup>3</sup>, neurotransmitters that makes you feel good when you eat them, even when you are not hungry. When you know that these neurotransmitters are also involved in drug addiction, you may understand why it is so hard for us to stop returning to these highly palatable foods.

If you have cravings only once in a while, you may not need to worry about it. However, if you find you have addictive-like eating behaviour towards a certain food (you may score yourself using the survey on the second page), here are a few tips from Dr. Neal Barnard, the president and founder of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, to help you keeping your resolutions to combat food cravings this year:

1. **Start with a healthy breakfast.** If you miss your breakfast, you are more likely to eat more at lunch and have snacks during the day.
2. **Choose foods that hold your blood sugar steady.** Go for high-fiber and low-GI foods in your meals. They prevent a blood sugar roller coaster and make you feel full longer, making you less tempted to food cravings.
3. **Boost appetite-taming leptin.** Leptin is a hormone that is produced by your body's fat cells and tells your brain that you have enough fat stores, so you can eat less or stop eating. Very-low calorie diet usually does not work as it causes loss of body fat and decreases leptin levels. On the other hand, low-fat foods tend to increase the amount of leptin in bloodstream, and boost its ability to work.
4. **Break craving cycles.** Break up the cues that tend to trigger your food cravings by shaking up your routine - you may visit different places, meet new people and develop new healthy habits such as exercising.
5. **Exercise and rest.** Cravings kick in easily when you experience stress or anxiety. Getting active and enough rest are healthier means, compared to finding comfort in food. When you are fit and well-rested, you are also more resilient in the face of temptation.
6. **Call in the reinforcements.** Gaining support from family and friends is helpful during your adaptation to healthier diet and routine.
7. **Use extra motivators.** Find a motivation that matters to you. Keeping that motivation in mind helps you to reject temptation and maintain a healthy diet.



## References

1. Alonso-Alonso, M., Woods, S. C., Pelchat, M., Grigson, P. S., Stice, E., Farooqi, S., Khoo, C. S., Mattes, R. D., & Beauchamp, G. K. (2015). Food reward system: Current perspectives and future research needs. *Nutrition Reviews*, 73(5), 296–307. <https://doi.org/10.1093/nutrit/nuv002>
2. Barnard, N. D., & Stepaniak, J. (2004). Breaking the food seduction: The hidden reasons behind food cravings--and 7 steps to end them naturally. St. Martin's Griffin.
3. de Macedo, I. C., de Freitas, J. S., & da Silva Torres, I. L. (2016). The influence of palatable diets in reward system activation: A mini review. *Advances in Pharmacological Sciences*, 2016, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2016/7238679>

# Modified Yale Food Addiction Scale

This survey asks about your eating habits in the past year. People sometimes have difficulty controlling how much they eat of certain foods such as:

- Sweets like ice cream, chocolate, doughnuts, cookies, cake, candy
- Starches like white bread, rolls, pasta, and rice
- Salty snacks like chips, pretzels, and crackers
- Fatty foods like steak, bacon, hamburgers, cheeseburgers, pizza, and French fries
- Sugary drinks like soda pop, lemonade, sports drinks, and energy drinks



When the following questions ask about **“CERTAIN FOODS”** please think of ANY foods or beverages similar to those listed in the food or beverage groups above or ANY OTHER foods you have had difficulty with in the past year.

	Never	Less than monthly	Once a month	2-3 times a month	Once a week	2-3 times a week	4-6 times a week	Every day
1. I ate to the point where I felt physically ill.	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
2. I spent a lot of time feeling sluggish or tired from overeating.	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
3. I avoided work, school or social activities because I was afraid I would overeat there.	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
4. If I had emotional problems because I hadn't eaten certain foods, I would eat those foods to feel better.	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
5. My eating behavior caused me a lot of distress.	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
6. I had significant problems in my life because of food and eating. These may have been problems with my daily routine, work, school, friends, family, or health.	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
7. My overeating got in the way of me taking care of my family or doing household chores.	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
8. I kept eating in the same way even though my eating caused emotional problems.	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
9. Eating the same amount of food did not give me as much enjoyment as it used to.	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
10. I had such strong urges to eat certain foods that I couldn't think of anything else.	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
11. I tried and failed to cut down on or stop eating certain foods.	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
12. I was so distracted by eating that I could have been hurt (e.g., when driving a car, crossing the street, operating machinery).	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
13. My friends or family were worried about how much I overate.	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1



## SCORING:

No Food Addiction	1 or fewer symptoms (Score 1 or below in total from Q1-4 & Q7-13)
No Food Addiction	Does not meet criteria for clinical significance (Score 0 for Q5&6)
Mild Food Addiction	2 or 3 symptoms and clinical significance (Score 2-3 in total from Q1-4 & Q7-13 AND Score 1 or above from Q5&6)
Moderate Food Addiction	4 or 5 symptoms and clinical significance (Score 4-5 in total from Q1-4 & Q7-13 AND Score 1 or above from Q5&6)
Severe Food Addiction	6 or more symptoms and clinical significance (Score 6 or above in total from Q1-4 & Q7-13 AND Score 1 or above from Q5&6)



# Do You Believe in Magic?

PASTOR MOISES GUERRERO  
HEAD CHAPLAIN

Superstition, according to the Cambridge dictionary, is a belief that is not based on human reasoning or scientific knowledge. Superstition is the non-scientific belief in the mystic connection between what is real and what is not. Such beliefs include aspects of certain religions as well as supernatural ideologies like astrology, omens, witchcraft, and prophecies. These are notions that are still maintained by some, despite evidence to the contrary. An example of a superstition is the concoction of a mystical recipe to ward off evil spirits that cause disease. Even after all the modernization and/or enlightenment that has taken place in the medical world, superstitious beliefs still persist in our society. Further to that, it is thought that most human beings, to a certain level, believe in some kind of irrational superstitious views.

On the other hand, science is the pursuit and application of knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world following a systematic methodology based on evidence.

In the year 2021, the COVID pandemic has made it easy for superstitious beliefs to gain a strong foothold in our society. A worrisome combination of factors, including fear, fake information, and ready access to an untold number of conspiracy theories, have resulted in a greater defiance of scientific principles. A study at Yale University in the United States, found that people with higher levels of paranoia and superstitious beliefs, were more likely to endorse health conspiracies about vaccines.

The word of God (through Prophetic insight) provides strong guidance into the future, and events that will take place at the end of earth's history. It also has a clear message against believing in magic, the occult, and superstition. It even goes further, giving us strong caution to stay away from mediums and soothsayers. Although the Bible has a persistent warning against false messengers, I am inclined to believe, that if the Bible had been written in 2021, it would also include a warning against conspiracy theories. Friends, when the time comes to make healthcare decisions, make decisions based on solid scientific findings, not internet rumors or conspiracy theories, and definitely, not superstition.

Reference:

Suthaharan, P., Reed, E., Leptourgos, P., Kenney, J., Uddenberg, S., & Mathys, C. et al. (2021). Paranoia and belief updating during a crisis. doi: 10.21203/rs.3.rs-145987/v1



## OUR *Prayer Room* AND *Worship* SERVICE



Caring for the whole person—body, mind and spirit — is an integral part of our hospital's approach to health care. Hong Kong Adventist Hospital takes every effort to look after your spiritual and emotional needs.

We have a prayer room which is located on the ground floor opposite to the entrance. It is opened to people of all faiths.

Our clinically trained chaplains are available 24-hours a day, seven days a week to offer guidance and counseling. For those who request, prayers are offered for the patients and their families.

Regardless of religious affiliation or the lack thereof, our chaplains are ready to offer spiritual and emotional support during your stay at the hospital.

A short inspiring morning message is offered every weekday from 8:40am to 9:00am in La Rue Building 7B. All patients are welcome to attend.

Please feel free to call upon our chaplains for emotional and spiritual support or to just have a listening ear.

May God bless you.

**From the Chaplain's Office**



**Lifestyle Management Center (LMC)** is a crucial component of Hong Kong Adventist Hospital, articulating its mission, aiming to provide health education to both our patients and the general public regarding the benefits of 'Total Health'.

Through services and programs such as the Lifestyle Medicine Clinic, comprehensive lifestyle assessment, health screenings, delicious vegan cooking demonstration, fitness club and interactive educational programs, participants can begin to restore their own health through lifestyle modification.

Our success depends largely on your participation and support. Let us strive together to promote better holistic health in our society.

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Your generosity will contribute to the healthy lifestyle education to the general public through Lifestyle Management Center. It will help our center run health seminars, cooking and fitness classes and health programs in order to educate the public on how to prevent, improve and even reverse chronic diseases.

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