

Cravings | Everyday Paleo

**Another great post by Jason Seib!*

Like last time, I have to get a little sciencey in this one, but I promise I will do my best to tie it all together. Also like last time, I am oversimplifying the biochemistry to make sure you learn something but you don't send me an envelope full of anthrax for confusing and frustrating you. You will need to read my last post on [Sugar, Insulin Resistance, and Fat Loss](#) to get the most out of this post.

Some of you lost your willpower last night. Others of you barely made it through. You were minding your business having a normal evening relaxing or getting ready for the next day when you were completely overcome with cravings. Suddenly it was all you could do to think about anything but whatever crunchy or sweet decadence might be lurking just steps away in your kitchen. You were good all day – paleo breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Sure, there were momentary temptations but your busy day helped you forget about them. Then when you finally tried to relax, cravings set in. If you gave in to them, you are kicking yourself today for all of yesterday's hard work you threw away. What the heck is going on here?!?

It's all about our friends from last time, glucose and insulin. Here is the diet example I used in the last post to represent a typical day for most Americans:

Oatmeal for breakfast.

Fat Free/Sugar Free Coffee-like Substance at your mid morning slump.

Subway sandwich for lunch because you want to be like Jared.

Bagel, granola, or other such processed carbs (or maybe another sugar-laden caffeinated beverage) to fight the afternoon slump.

Pasta or rice at dinner.

Something crunchy or sweet between 8 and 10 pm.

If this is how you ate for most of your adult life your body would have been highly adapted to using glucose for energy while storing fat. Lipoprotein lipase (LPL) was constantly on duty ushering fatty acids into your fat cells, and hormone sensitive lipase (HSL) would rarely have been called into action. Unfortunately, you are a highly adaptive creature. Eating this way for years has taught your body that this is normal and now you want to change the rules with proper human nutrition. Of course there is going to be a fight.

To sharpen this concept to a fine point, you are not fat adapted. In other words, your body doesn't readily release stored energy (fat) from your batteries (fat cells) to run your generators (mitochondria) because it is WAAAAY out of practice. You have been pumping a constant supply of glucose (from processed carbs) into your blood stream and, since glucose must be used first when it is present, your fat cells have turned into warehouses instead of batteries. To correct this, your fat cells must release fatty acids and your mitochondria must accept those long lost friends as fuel. This might take a while. You didn't get into your current state overnight; don't expect to flip a switch and magically escape unscathed.

Back to your cravings and last night's nightmare. When you eat a processed carb-laden meal, you get a nice spike in glucose, your pancreas kicks out a bunch of insulin to mitigate the glucose, and the glucose is fed to your hungry cells, stored as glycogen, or turned into fat and stuffed into your buns and thighs. When the glucose is all gone, a healthy body shifts into fat burning mode and uses the fat it just stored to keep on trucking. But your body can't remember how to make the shift. Glucose is all it really knows. That leaves just one option – scream for more glucose! Screams = cravings.

There is an easy way to distinguish cravings from hunger. Simply swap out the food you are craving for something paleo approved. If you are truly hungry most foods will sound good. I've said it more times than I can count, nobody ever loses their cool at 10 pm and eats a pound of broccoli or a 20 ounce steak. In reality it's more like, "Why am I suddenly surrounded by empty chip bags and ice cream containers?"

So you are probably going to throw rocks at me now because I can't offer you an easy out. The bottom line is that when you eat a legit paleo diet without cheating for 3 or 4 weeks (yes, that means in a row), you will become fat adapted and regain your self control and sanity. However, every time you cheat in that starting period you will most likely knock yourself back to square one. This is why we like to say that you aren't cheating in the beginning, you just haven't started yet. (To get through the beginning, CLEAN OUT YOUR KITCHEN!) Once you are fat adapted and healthy the occasional cheat is not a problem. Unfortunately, the only answer is a little will power, but you can take solace in the fact that your trials and tribulations are very

temporary. Get to the other side and you will feel great, perform well, and live long in a body that's easy on the eyes because it's **healthy**.

It's time to get serious.