

The Key to Control Appetite

Do you notice that you crave junk food more when you're sleep deprived? If so, you're not alone. Studies have shown that both quality and quantity of sleep have a profound effect on appetite and even willpower. Sleep deprivation disrupts our normal, delicate balance of appetite-regulating hormones, which results in an increased desire for high-calorie, salty/sweet/fatty foods, even when we're not hungry.

These hormones are critically important. Leptin, made by your fat cells, and ghrelin, released in the gastrointestinal tract, act as a push-pull system to regulate your appetite and energy balance. Under ideal circumstances, this helps you to both moderate your food intake and keep a healthy weight.

Leptin, which decreases appetite, is released into your body after eating, and it helps signal you stop by making you feel full. Ghrelin is the opposite: it increases appetite and is released when your blood sugar drops and your body needs food.

What does this have to do with sleep? These powerful hormones, in addition to their effects on appetite, also play a major role in sleep. Studies suggest that sleep deprivation causes leptin levels to drop. The less leptin in your blood, the weaker your signal is to stop eating – which translates into increased hunger. To add insult to injury, less sleep is also associated with higher levels of ghrelin.

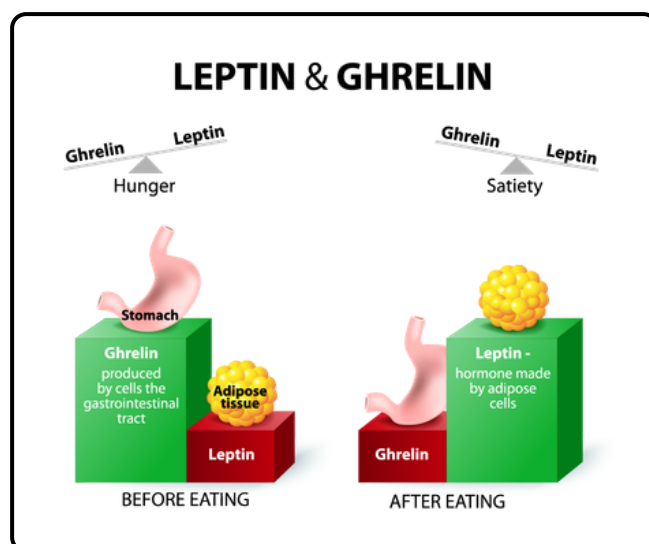
Sleep deprived people, in general, have a higher level of ghrelin and a lower level of leptin in their blood than those who sleep well. And obese and overweight people have higher levels of leptin and lower levels of ghrelin in their blood than normal weight people.

The good news is that restful sleep can restore leptin and ghrelin to normal levels, and improved sleep habits over the long term can have lasting, positive effects on weight management. Aim for at least 7 1/2 hours every night, ideally 8 1/2. Add in your strategic diet and exercise efforts, and you're on your way to optimal weight management.

Healthy lifestyle strategies work, even when you're tired. For example, keeping your blood sugar levels stable is key to conquering cravings and staving off hunger. To do that, focus meals and snacks on foods low in sugar and high in fiber, with moderate amounts of protein and healthy fat.

To combat hunger, eat every few hours, even if just a little snack in between meals, like a handful of raw nuts, a 1/2 sandwich, or small container of unsweetened yogurt. Sip on water all day to help feel full and control portions. And last but not certainly not least, regular exercise is the best medicine for fatigue, even if you're severely sleep deprived. Keep moving, even if 2-3 short walks throughout the day.

This week's hunger-busting recipe contains plenty of fiber, protein, fatty acids, and water, all known to help fill you up.



Quick & Easy Veggie Soup for One

You will need:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- ½ small onion, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, very thinly sliced
- 2½ cups vegetable broth, vegetable stock, or vegetable bouillon
- ¾ cup canned kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup (packed) fresh spinach leaves OR 1 cup frozen spinach
- 1 tbsp Italian seasoning
- Salt and pepper to taste



In a large pot, sauté the onion and carrot in the olive oil over medium heat until they begin to soften. Add the remaining ingredients and simmer for about 15 minutes.

Enjoy with a cooked whole grain (like brown rice, quinoa, or whole grain noodles) whole grain crackers, or whole wheat bread.