

## Considering Cravings: Tips for Conquering Your Sweet Tooth

(Author: Nina Crowley, PhD, RDN, LD - Obesity Action Coalition)

If you talk about sweet treats, you'll likely hear people with strong opinions in two very different camps. General thoughts and advice range from suggesting strict limitations to giving unconditional permission to eat all foods. What works best for you will depend on you and your goals!

### What's hunger got to do with it?



Hunger is your body's way of telling you that it needs food. Cravings are an intense desire for a specific food. They may be associated with hunger, but not always! So how can we tell the difference?

I once heard someone say, "If you're hungry, an apple will do." This has always been a helpful mantra for me, as I often carry an apple in my lunch bag. I fondly call it the "see you tomorrow apple" if I'm not hungry. But if I truly am, it's the crunchiest and most delicious apple I've ever eaten. If you were to ask a group of people what hunger feels like, you'd get several answers. Hunger

means something different to everyone! To identify whether or not you're really hungry, look for physical indicators such as:

- Hunger pangs
- Stomach growling or grumbling
- A feeling of emptiness in your stomach
- Weakness
- Low energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Light-headedness or shakiness
- Irritability, crankiness (aka "hangry") light-headedness or shakiness

If your hunger feels somewhat subjective or you're more of a numbers person, try checking-in with your hunger using a "hunger and fullness scale" from 0-10 (0 being empty; 10 being uncomfortably full). This will give you an objective sense of hunger and help you rely on your body's internal cues.

There are many versions of the scale, but you should strive to land somewhere close to the middle at a three or a four (your stomach is growling, you need energy or you feel slightly empty). You might want to stop eating when you've reached seven or eight (you feel satisfied or slightly uncomfortable)

Some individuals attempting weight-loss try fighting their hunger by ignoring or suppressing it. They may go several hours without eating, but in reality, the body's natural response is to build-up ravenous hunger. During times when you're at a zero or two on the hunger scale, you need food immediately and you likely don't have any planned meals/snacks available. Therefore, you reach for something close and easy. Hangry and irrational, you may respond to environmental or emotional cues instead of your body's intuition. Is it a craving, then, if you're just truly hungry? I think not!



### **Why do we get cravings?**

Food cravings have many layers including thoughts, emotions, behaviors and psychology. When you indulge a craving, you're likely to feel a sense of reward. That sense of reward may push you to associate pleasure with a particular food so that sight, smell and thoughts can encourage temptation.

Cravings can also be associated with certain people, places, events, weather or times of day. Your brain is responsible for making these connections so that the next time you experience one of these cues, a memory or pleasurable experience may be triggered. Say hello to cravings!

### **What kinds of foods do we crave?**

Everyone craves different foods, but those foods are usually highly palatable. In other words, think of treats such as chocolate, pastries, chips, pizza and other foods high in fat and sugar. Highly-palatable foods activate the pleasure center in our brain and release a stream of feel-good chemicals called endorphins. Sugar is probably the most common food craving I see in my patients.

While nothing is inherently wrong with craving "yummy" foods such as sweets, our underlying reasons for those cravings can be problematic – especially if you feel they're impacting your health. To help with this, practice noticing what you really need. For instance, you may be feeling lonely or tired, or maybe you're craving connection. Instead of reflexively grabbing a cookie or candy bar, take a moment and try to understand what you are really feeling. You may need sleep!

Cravings are more common when you're stressed or fatigued. The reward value of food is higher when your cortisol (stress hormone) is elevated. Instead of trying to suppress your sweet cravings or "power through them," try stress management! Address the source of your stress and again, don't underestimate the power of enough sleep.

Furthermore, you may notice that food cravings are more frequent if you restrict or avoid certain foods. Ever tell yourself you're "not allowed" to have something? Labeling foods as "forbidden" can actually have the opposite reaction! Restriction may increase cravings and even contribute to overeating. However, the real damage here is the guilt associated with this roller-coaster of a pattern. Rather than eliminating a food that is often a craving, try to have a small portion to curb the craving.

### **What do you do with cravings?**

Think like a detective and dig deeper for the reasons you crave certain foods. Are some of your routines or traditions built around them? Are you scrolling through Instagram only to find yourself wanting something you didn't even notice seeing? If you're distracted, these cues are harder to notice.

Consider mindfulness! Rather than feeling helpless, feel empowered because you can choose how you respond to cravings. It's tough to nail down the habit, but taking the time to be mindful about your behaviors can make it easier to keep up. Observe your thoughts, physical feelings and emotions. The key is to know that it's okay to eat what you are craving. Your goal should be to pay full attention to your experiences so you can fully enjoy them! Then let it go and move on with your day.

Self-care is often missing in our busy, stressed-out lives, but it can help you recharge and reconnect. It can also reduce the frequency of unhealthy cravings like sugar. Self-care can mean anything from getting pampered or spending time with a friend to simply relaxing during "you time."

For those of us seeking weight-loss or weight maintenance, many things influence our thoughts and emotions toward sweets. You likely hear a lot of "You can't," "You shouldn't" or "You're not allowed." You may even feel guilty for wanting to have sweets while you're trying to keep weight off.

Many of us are black and white thinkers and have a long history of labeling food as "good or bad." Change takes a lot of time and a lot of effort! But if you remove shame from eating certain foods, you can reduce stress and the intensity as well as frequency of food cravings.

### **Learn to just do you!**

Restricting foods can increase our cravings for what's "forbidden." We then get caught in a cycle of guilt and repetition. On the other hand, others often find that moderation is a better approach. "Just a taste" of something, like a few bites of a cupcake, can rid them of the idea and "do the trick." Still, some feel like having just a bite or two can lead to overeating.

What's the real key? Get in touch with yourself to work out a plan of attack. Maybe you need some flexibility to find greater enjoyment as you reach your goals. As Yoni Friedhoff says, "Your best weight is whatever weight you reach when you are living the healthiest life that you honestly enjoy."

# Surgical Weight Loss Support Groups

We encourage regular attendance to these groups. Attending groups is one way to reaffirm the importance of your commitment to surgery. Studies show those who attend groups, weigh themselves regularly, and record dietary intake are more likely to manage their weight. **Send an e-mail to Lynn Bolduc if you would like to be put on a reminder list for any one of the groups.**

## Did you know...

- Regular attendance at support group doubles the likelihood of successful weight loss after surgery
- Those who regularly attend support group have 3.7x greater success with weight loss surgery

## Bangor: Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center (for all patients, before and after surgery)

When	Where	Time	Leaders	Upcoming Groups
First Friday of every month*	Mason Auditorium	4:30 - 6:30 pm	Lynn Bolduc, RD (August and October) and Tama Fitzpatrick, RD (July and September)	July 12, 2019* Aug 2, 2019 Sep 6, 2019 Oct 4, 2019 Nov 1, 2019

July meeting will be held on 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday

## Online: (Guest speakers are subject to change)

Third Tuesday of every month	Online	5-6pm	Northern Light SWL Dietitians	July 16, 2019 Aug 20, 2019 Sep 17, 2019 Oct 15, 2019 Nov 19, 2019
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## Bangor: Northern Light Health Center, Union St. - Staying On Track Support Group

(for patients who have had weight loss surgery):

When	Where	Time	Leaders	Upcoming Groups
Second Wednesday of every month	Northern Light Endocrine and Diabetes Center, Classroom 905 Union Street, Suite 11	5-6 pm	Dr. Nina Boulard, Clinical Psychologist	July 10, 2019 August 14, 2019 September 11, 2019 October 9, 2019 November 13, 2019

\*Due to the small room size and sensitivity of topics discussed, we ask that you come alone to this group. This group is now open to **ANYONE** who has had weight loss surgery. The group size is typically small.

## Presque Isle: Northern Light A R Gould (Previously known as TAMC)

First Wednesday of every month	McCain A Conference Room	5-6 pm	Ben Mayhew, RD Thomas Mellow, RD Angel Hebert, RD	July 3, 2019 August 7, 2019 September 4, 2019 October 2, 2019 November 6, 2019
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## Waterville: Northern Light Inland Hospital

First Wednesday of every month	Medical Arts Building Conference Room	5:00-6:30 pm	Lynn Bolduc, RD (Sep, Oct) Tama Fitzpatrick, RD (Nov) Bryan Fritzler, PhD (Aug)	No July meeting August 7, 2019 September 4, 2019 October 2, 2019 November 6, 2019
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## Resources



### Hannaford: Individual or Small Group Tour for Surgical Weight Loss Patients and Families

Sign up to tour the store one on one or with a small group. Tours are available at the Broadway and Airport Mall locations and are scheduled as requested.

**To sign up, please contact Caitlin Ratten, MS RD LD** by email [Caitlin.Ratten@hannaford.com](mailto:Caitlin.Ratten@hannaford.com) or stop by the Hannaford Customer Service Desk.

Meet Caitlin at our Online Support group on October 15, 2019!

### 2019 Clothing Swaps at Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center

In an attempt to help our patients as they change sizes quickly after weight loss, Northern Light Surgical Weight Loss has been having clothing swaps since 2000. We ask that you consider donating gently used, clean clothing. You do not need to donate clothing in order to take advantage of the swap. You can take clothing without giving and give without taking. No money will be exchanged. The clothes not taken at the end of the night are given to charities such as Salvation Army, Goodwill or Shoestring Thrift shop. People usually bring the clothing between 4 and 4:30 pm on the night of the clothing swap and the swap part happens immediately after the support group (6:30 pm) in 2D. This is a patient-led activity which can always use more volunteers. Please contact Lynn Bolduc at [lbolduc@northernlight.org](mailto:lbolduc@northernlight.org), if you are interested in how to pay-it-forward.

- **Friday, October 4 - in the Grant 2D conference room, 6:30-7pm**

*\*Please note that we do not have a way to store clothing brought in advance and left at our offices.*

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## Recommendation

### Living with Bariatric Surgery by Denise Ratcliffe

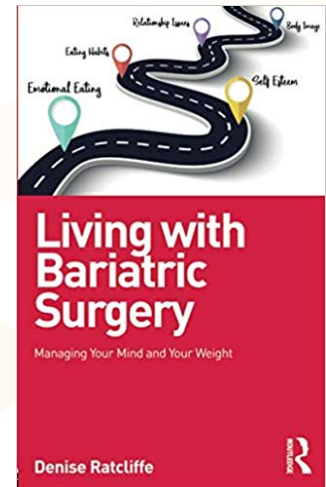
ISBN-13: 978-1138217126

ISBN-10: 1138217123

Living with Bariatric Surgery: *Managing Your Mind and Your Weight* aims to help those who are considering bariatric surgery develop a psychological understanding of their eating behavior and the changes needed in order to make surgery successful. It is also a resource for those who have undergone surgery to help them adapt to the physical, psychological and relationship adjustments that occur.

Whilst the benefits of bariatric surgery are significant, the psychological challenges it presents for patients may have been overlooked. This book will help patients develop a realistic view of bariatric surgery and the changes required. It incorporates the real-life experiences of people who have had bariatric surgery, showing how they have responded to the psychological and behavioral changes after surgery, and also features helpful psychoeducation, exercises and strategies to facilitate reflection and learning.

*Living with Bariatric Surgery* will be an essential guide for anyone considering, preparing for or recovering from bariatric surgery, as well as health professionals working with these clients.



## Ask the Dietitians

### Answers from Surgical Weight Loss dietitians

You can find many weight loss supplements online. Some claim to help you shed off excess body weights by improving glucose metabolism, enhancing gut microbiome, blocking the absorption of nutrients, suppressing hunger, and so on.

Would you recommend weight loss supplement such as ItWorks! And Plexus?

Unfortunately, these products have typically not undergone any clinical trials. Even when there is data available, the testing may not be done in a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled human trials. We simply do not know if you truly receive the benefits they claim, nor the safety or efficacy of the products for consumption at the level they recommend. We also do not know if those products contain what is stated on their labels as it is not regulated by FDA.

Additionally, they tend to be pricy. Products may cost you minimum \$50-100 on monthly basis. This can be your gym membership!

# Ask the Pharmacists

Answers from Mark Basile, PharmD

I had gastric bypass in 2003. I had a bone density test done and it came out as osteoporosis and the medication they are thinking of using is called Reclast (Zoledronic). I need to know if this drug is safe for someone who had gastric bypass. If not appropriate, what would be a better fit instead?

## Osteoporosis treatment after gastric bypass

There are guideline recommendations from the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, The Obesity Society, and the American Society for Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery to address this question.

According to the guidelines, **“if therapy [for osteoporosis] is indicated, then intravenously administered bisphosphonates should be used,** as concerns exist about adequate oral absorption and the potential for ulceration with orally administered bisphosphonates.”

The recommended intravenous dosages of bisphosphonates include Zoledronic Acid (Reclast) 5mg

once a year or Ibandronate 3 mg every 3 months. If concerns about absorption or potential ulceration are mitigated, oral bisphosphonate administration can potentially be used.

In the scenario above, IV Zoledronic acid (Reclast) are the preferred medication to use in a gastric bypass patient.

## Biotin and thyroid functions

Biotin does not affect the actual thyroid levels in one’s body. It is okay to take Biotin and Levothyroxine. However, and this is important, Biotin can interact with many laboratory assays that we use to measure thyroid levels in one’s body. This can result in inaccurate/false results. Biotin interference with thyroid labs depends on the specific assay each laboratory uses. Most commonly, it results in falsely lower TSH levels, falsely higher T3 levels, or falsely higher T4 levels.

I am worried about my hair loss and considering taking Biotin. I heard that Biotin might affect people with thyroid issues. Should I not take Biotin if I have Hashimoto Disease?



The general recommendation to minimize this interference with thyroid laboratory assays is to skip your daily Biotin dose prior to getting blood work and take your dose after blood draws are completed. Always let the laboratory personnel and your doctor know if you take Biotin and are getting thyroid tests done! They can provide you with further patient-specific guidance on how long to skip Biotin doses before your test.

# Recipes

Recipe suitable for Phase 5 diet plan (Recipe courtesy of American Heart Association)  
Servings: 6. Per serving: Calories 104, Protein 11g, Total Carbs 14g, Dietary Fiber 1g

## Baked Mozzarella Cheese Bites with Easy Marinara Sauce

### Ingredients

For the Baked Mozzarella Bites:

- 2 1/2 Tbsp cornstarch
- 1 1/2 cups whole-wheat panko breadcrumbs
- 2 large egg whites
- 2 Tbsp water
- 1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 6 (1-ounce) sticks fat-free mozzarella string cheese (each one cut into 4 pieces)



For the Easy Marinara Sauce:

- 1 1/2 cups coarse-grain, no-salt-added, no-sodium, strained tomatoes
- 1 1/2 cups low-sodium, jarred, crushed tomatoes
- 1 1/2 cups low-sodium, jarred, crushed tomatoes
- 1/4 tsp ground black pepper

### Instructions:

For the Baked Mozzarella Bites:

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Prepare a baking sheet by lining with foil and coating with cooking spray.
2. Add the cornstarch and panko breadcrumbs separately into their own large zip-top bags. In a shallow dish, whisk together egg whites, water, and pepper. Remove each string cheese from its plastic, and cut each one into 4 pieces.
3. To bread the cheese, add a handful of cheese pieces into the zip-top with cornstarch; shake to coat or let your child do the shaking action. Next, transfer the cheese pieces to the egg mixture, coating each one entirely with egg. Last, transfer the cheese to the zip-top bag with breadcrumbs, shaking until each cheese piece is fully coated with breadcrumbs. Place on prepared baking sheet. Repeat the breading process until each cheese piece is coated.
4. Cook in the oven just until the cheese begins to melt and ooze out of 1 or 2 bites, about 5 to 6 minutes.
5. Serve mozzarella bites with marinara sauce to dip.

For the Easy Marinara Sauce:

1. Add all the ingredients into a medium heavy-duty pot and stir together to combine.
2. Warm over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until marinara is warm, around 5 minutes. Cover and keep on low to keep warm until serving.



## High Protein Strawberry Iced Tea

Suitable for Phase 4 diet plan and up (Recipe courtesy of Unjury)  
Servings: 1. Per serving: Calories 100, Protein 21g, Total Carbs 5g, Dietary Fiber 0g

### Ingredients

- 1 packet or 1 scoop Unjury Strawberry Sorbet
- 1 Cup Unsweetened iced tea
- ½ C ice



### Instructions:

1. Measure 1 cup of prepared, unsweetened iced tea
2. Stir in Unjury
3. Mix in ½ cup of ice

## Turkey Sausage and Egg Casserole

Suitable for Phase 5 diet plan and up (Recipe courtesy of American Diabetes Association)  
Servings: 10. Per serving: Calories 110, Protein 13g, Total Carbs 8g, Dietary Fiber 1g



### Ingredients

- ½ Cup green onions (chopped)
- 2 Cup skim or 1% milk
- Nonstick cooking spray
- ½ tsp mustard powder
- ¼ tsp salt (optional)
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- 16 ounces egg substitute
- 4 slices whole wheat bread (cut into 1/2-inch cubes)
- 3 precooked turkey breakfast sausage patties (diced)
- ¼ Cup cheddar cheese (reduced-fat, shredded)

### Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degree F. Coat a 9x13 baking dish with cooking spray.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together nonfat milk, green onions, dry mustard, salt (optional), pepper, and egg substitute.
3. Place bread cubes and sausage on the bottom of the baking dish, pour egg mixture evenly over bread and sausage. Top with cheddar cheese.
4. Cover pan with aluminum foil and bake for 20 minutes. Remove foil and bake for an additional 40 minutes.

# Resources

## Quarterly Newsletter

Hard copies of the newsletter are distributed at the support groups and dietitian visits. The SKINNY is published four times per year. If you want to receive this newsletter electronically, please e-mail [Lbolduc@northernlight.org](mailto:Lbolduc@northernlight.org) or [mmarzilli@northernlight.org](mailto:mmarzilli@northernlight.org) and they will add you to our distribution list. Once on the mailing list, you will receive monthly e-mail reminders about support groups.

## Online Information Session

The Northern Light Surgical Weight Loss Comprehensive Informational Session is available online! The 60 minute video is broken up into 10 chapters, so it does not have to be watched all at once. If you or someone that you know is interested, please visit [northernlighthealth.org/SurgicalWeightLoss](http://northernlighthealth.org/SurgicalWeightLoss) and click on “**Surgical Weight Loss Information Sessions**” and then [Online Information Session](#) to read more. Once you have finished watching the online class, fill out the form located below the video links or call 973-6383 if you are interested in joining the program.

**It is also a great refresher for those who have already had weight loss surgery**

## Online Physical Therapy Videos

Check out our Physical Therapy videos. The 50 minute PT session is divided into 6 short chapters and is available for those starting the program, as well as those who would like to refresh their knowledge on a well-balanced exercise plan.

[northernlighthealth.org/SWL-Physical-Therapy](http://northernlighthealth.org/SWL-Physical-Therapy)

Or from Northern Light Surgical Weight Loss home page, choose “Support Before Surgical Weight Loss”, then “Physical Therapy for Surgical Weight Loss.”

## Check out our Patient Stories

Please visit [northernlighthealth.org/SurgicalWeightLoss](http://northernlighthealth.org/SurgicalWeightLoss).

Click on “**Testimonials**”

This web portal has our bariatric surgeons answering questions about weight loss surgery.

## Support Group

We now offer an Online Support Group on the third Tuesday monthly at 5-6p for those who wish to participate. If you are interested in participating in our online support group, please email Lynn at [Lbolduc@northernlight.org](mailto:Lbolduc@northernlight.org) or [tfitzpatric@northernlight.org](mailto:tfitzpatric@northernlight.org)

## Darlene's Story

I was always chunky as a child and teen, when I got married at age 18 and started having kids at 20, I started getting heavier progressively over the years. In spring 2018, I was at my heaviest weight at age 51. I tried and failed at many diets previously, and couldn't really exercise because of ankle, knee, and lower back pain.

Ten or so years ago, I sat in on the initial meeting and received an educational binder. Bypass was the most popular at the time. I walked away knowing that wasn't for me. In spring 2018, I was shopping for a jacket and initially was unable to find one that fit. I even tried on men's jackets. I ended up finding one that fit my arms with my large bat wings. It was a 4X, the largest size that I had ever had to purchase. I told my husband, "That's it, I have got to do something! I think I'll look into surgery again." He has supported me through this entire process. He's gone to appointments with me, learned what I need to do and has helped me through all of it. He is even eating healthier, quit drinking soda, and is taking his diabetes medication faithfully.

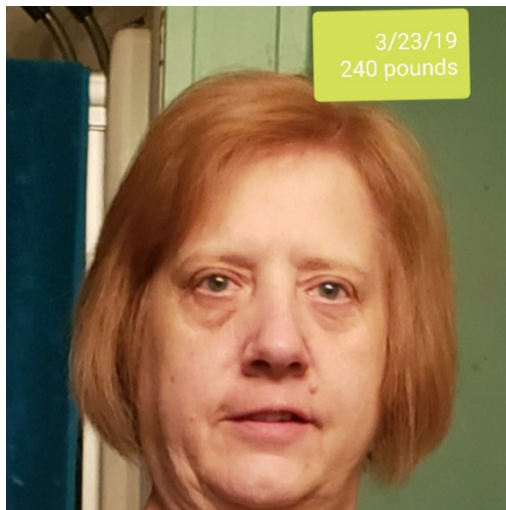


On June 11, 2018 at my primary care provider's office, I received a referral into the Surgical Weight Loss program; I weighed 324 lbs. On December 27, the day of my sleeve surgery with Dr. Toder, I was 272 lbs and now I weigh 228 lbs, down 96 pounds since June! I have joined exercise classes and go faithfully 3 days a week. Saturday morning, we use suspension straps which uses our own body weight to do cardio and strength training. Tuesday and Thursday evenings I go to a class where we also do cardio and strength training for an hour each night. I have more energy. I feel great, and look more toned. During the day, as a

home-licensed family childcare provider, I look forward to my evening exercise classes. It feels great, partly just to be out with my daughter-in-law and other women doing the same thing.

On April 14, I participated in the Thomas College Mud Dog 5K with eight friends. Going into it, I didn't care if I finished last, as long as I finished. I completed the race number 401 out of 408 participants. That day, I had the support of my husband, son, grandkids, daughter-in-law, and her family. It was a lot of fun, and I look forward to doing it next year. On May 5, I plan on doing a 5K color run. I love being able to do things that I've always wanted to try, but couldn't physically do before surgery.

I have had no complications from the surgery. It has been a life saver. My goal weight is 170 lbs, which I know I will attain.



## We need patient stories!

One of our favorite parts of putting together this newsletter is being able to publish our patients' stories of success. If you are interested in sharing your story for a future edition of The Skinny, please contact us!

- Lynn – [lbolduc@northernlight.org](mailto:lbolduc@northernlight.org)
- Valerie – [vincurtis@northernlight.org](mailto:vincurtis@northernlight.org)
- Tama – [tfitzpatrick@northernlight.org](mailto:tfitzpatrick@northernlight.org)
- Andrea – [asaquet@northernlight.org](mailto:asaquet@northernlight.org)
- Miki – [mmarzilli@northernlight.org](mailto:mmarzilli@northernlight.org)