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The experience of food craving: A prospective investigation in healthy women

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Abstract

This study aimed to provide a detailed analysis of the experience of food craving in a healthy, non-clinical group of women. Twenty-five women who reported food cravings prospectively recorded their experiences over a period of 5 weeks using a Food Craving Record. The average number of cravings recorded was just under 2 per week. Craving for chocolate amounted to 49% of all the food cravings. Subtle differences in the change in arousal and hunger were noted between chocolate cravings and those for other sweet foods. Additional differences were found between these cravings and those for savoury foods, in their situational circumstances and speed of disappearance. There was a premenstrual increase in food cravings but no selective change in the types of food craved. Overall, the food cravings reported by these women were hunger-reducing, mood-improving experiences, directed at wanting to consume highly pleasant tasting food. This analysis should serve as a template against which other subject groups and other forms of craving may be explored.

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