

If you have any questions, ask your care team.

Managing Urges and Cravings

We all have cravings and urges to eat sometimes! Finding ways to manage cravings and the urge to eat can help you maintain a healthy weight and help you to feel more in control of your eating habits.

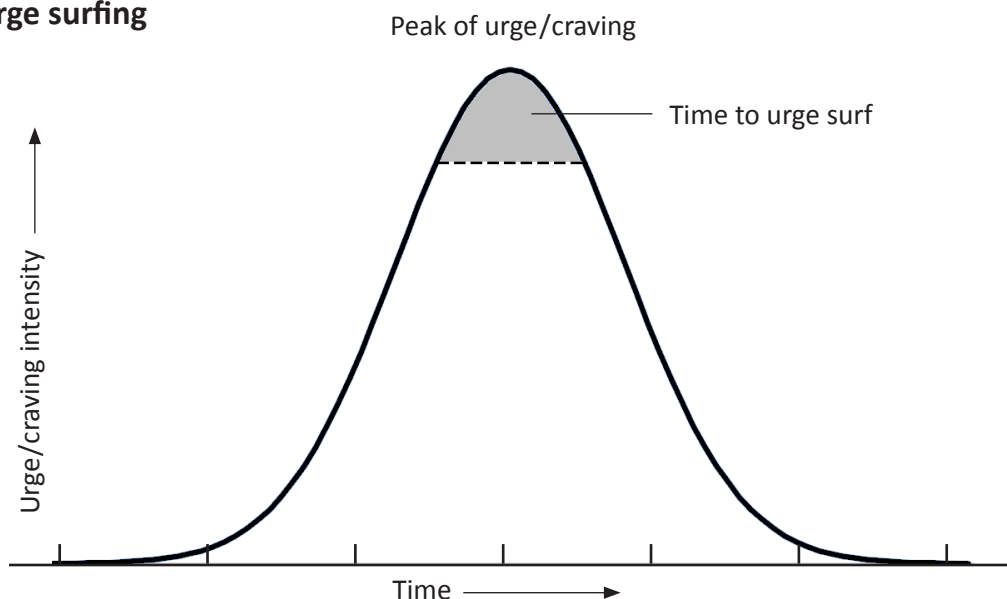
It is important to know that cravings get more intense with time until they eventually hit a peak of discomfort and desire. We often think we need to eat to make the discomfort go away. However, the discomfort and craving will decline and go away after a while if you do not give into it. The challenge is not to give into the craving when it is at its worst.

Urge surfing

Instead of seeing the urge as bad and trying to get rid of or to control it, it is helpful to accept the urge as a temporary feeling or discomfort. Notice that it will rise, crest and then fall much like a wave.

You can learn how to get through the peak (when the urge is at its worst) with urge surfing (Figure 1). Urge surfing is the process of “riding the wave” of your thoughts, feelings, urges or cravings. It is like how you would ride or surf a wave in the ocean. It can help you get through the peak when cravings and discomfort are the highest. You do not act on the urge to eat. Rather, you “ride it out” until the feeling goes away.

Figure 1. Urge surfing



How to urge surf

Follow these guidelines to help you surf your urges instead of sinking or giving into them — or making them more intense.

1. **Admit and be open to the urge.** Rather than trying to suppress or get rid of it (which often makes it worse), practice accepting the urge as a temporary feeling that will go away with time. Try to stop thinking of it as bad.
2. **Observe it.** Notice where you feel it and what it feels like physically. Notice how strong it is. Rate the urge on a scale of 1 to 10. Keep checking on the strength of the urge or craving and notice if it is rising or falling.
3. **Remind yourself: No matter how strong the urge is, it will eventually fade away.** You can ride the wave until it lessens. You can accept the urge and make room for it, rather than fighting or giving into it.
4. **Surf.** Sometimes the urge will go away on its own if you simply let it be and let it go.

At times, the urge may feel too powerful to simply observe. Then, we need to help ourselves surf over the peak by doing things that actively engage our minds and bodies. Remember, the goal is to get through the craving and watch it fade — not to suppress it (which can make it worse).

Below are some activity ideas that can help you get through the craving until it fades. Writing out a list of activities before you get an urge can help you stay prepared. Notice that the items on the list are not activities that you can do passively or in combination with eating. It is important to choose eating incompatible activities.

Activity ideas

- Go for a brisk walk.
- Exercise.
- Play a video game.
- Take a bath or shower.
- Ride a bike.
- Paint your nails.
- Play a game.
- Organize a drawer or closet.
- Clean or do laundry.
- Knit or crochet.
- Color or paint.
- Do puzzles.
- Do a craft or hobby.

