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Craving chocolate? Watching others eat it might reduce the urge

But there's a hitch

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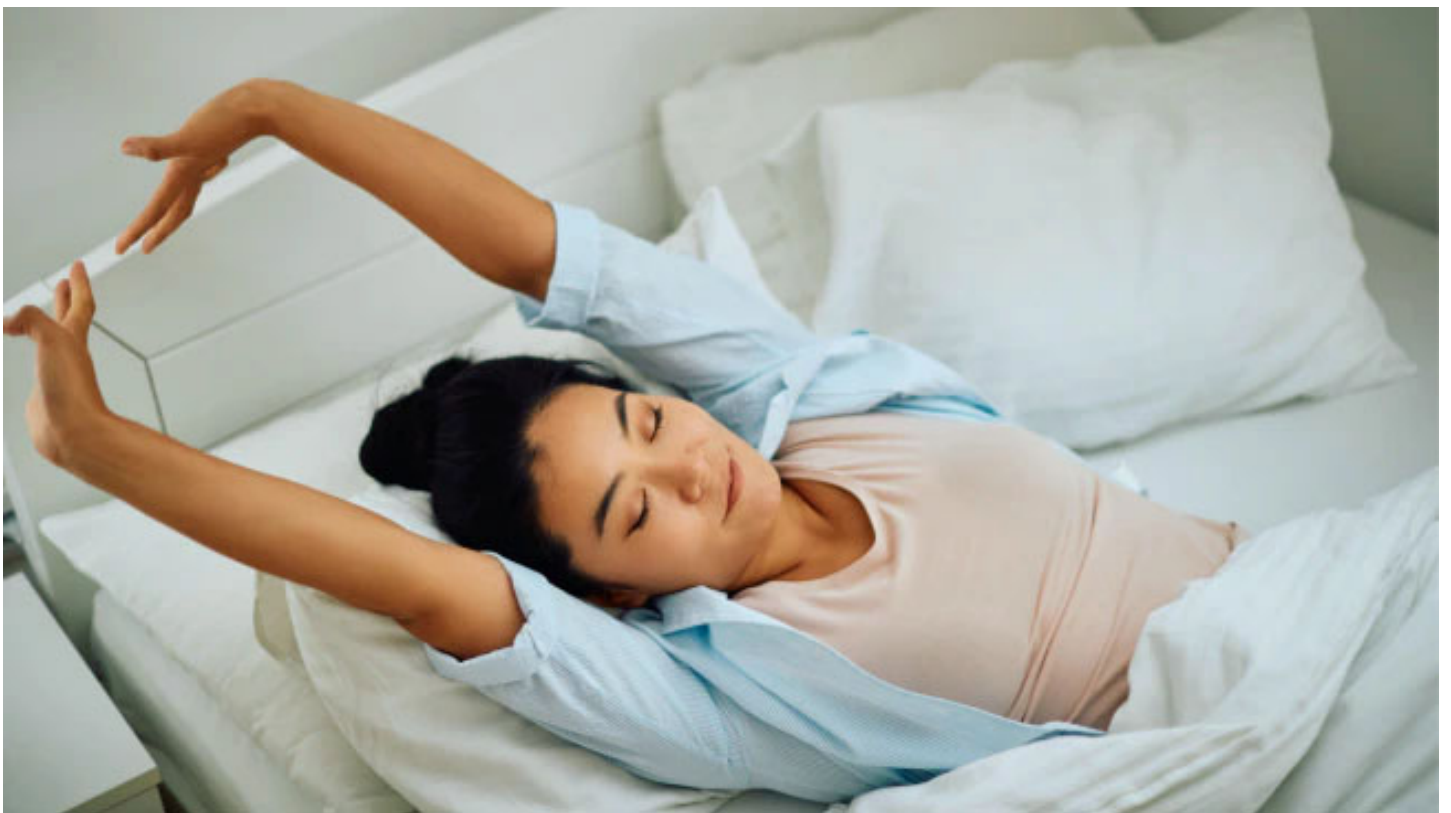
Could looking at chocolate really kill the urge? Image: Getty

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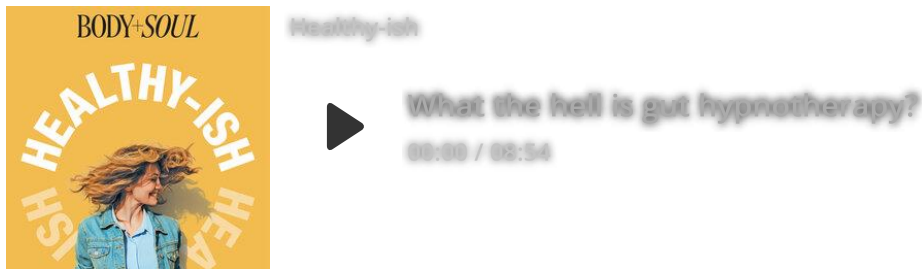


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Compulsive eating can be a huge challenge for some people, but new research from a Nanyang Technological University in Singapore could be the answer to their prayers.

It can be pretty difficult to kick a craving – especially of the chocolate variety.

However a new study out of Singapore has found by doing two simple things, you might never experience an insatiable desire for sweet treats ever again!



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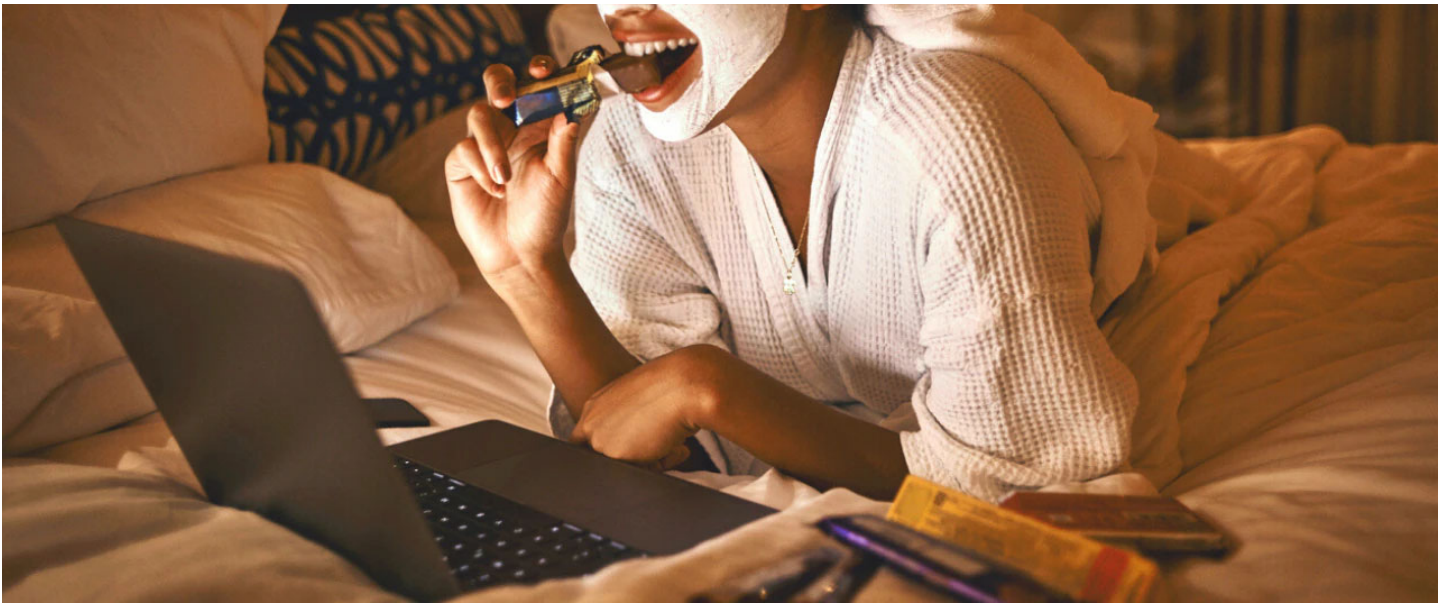
According to a team of scientists from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, watching videos of people eating chocolate could be the secret to curbing the urge. Even smelling the chocolate can deter cravings, with the data showing that the more you smell it, cravings can be deterred by an extra 11 per cent.

There is one hitch, though. The videos need to be 'immersive videos.' Think, virtual reality, augmented reality headsets or 360-degree videos. Basically, they need to make the viewer feel like they're part of the clip themselves.

Of the 317 Singaporean students between the ages of 21 and 28, who participated in the study and watched an immersive video 30 times for a total of eight minutes, consumed an average of 32 to 38 per cent less confectionary than those who didn't.

These aren't staggering figures, but they are telling.





Smelling chocolate had a similar, habituating, effect as watching people consuming chocolate and decreased the participants' desire for the candy. Image: iStock

Benjamin Li Junting, an NTU associate professor who led the study, said his team's study suggests that viewing food-related immersive videos may be a way to induce satiation.

"This could be helpful for individuals looking to curb their appetites or manage compulsive eating behaviours," he said.

"For example, clinicians might tap into habituation as a psychological mechanism in therapy interventions for patients. This can possibly appear in the form of repeated viewings of other people eating food, leading to reduced desire to eat or induce feelings of satiation or fullness."

The same goes for the testing done on participants who were bombarded with the scent of chocolate while watching the immersive videos. They then ate around 11 per cent less, or just one piece of chocolate, compared to those who watched without the scent.





Read this before you head down to the shops. Image: Getty

He suggested that the smell added to the stimulation, and had the same effect of eating chocolate, despite not actually ingesting it.

“Smelling chocolate had a similar, habituating, effect as watching people consuming chocolate and decreased the participants’ desire for the candy.”

“Some researchers have termed this embodied cognition,” he said.

“This makes sense as the experience of food consumption typically involves more than one sense, and the addition of a food scent appears to enhance the effect of one feeling satiated, or full.”



Food consumption videos could have significant effects on eating behaviour. Image: Getty

So, what do these findings actually mean for compulsive eaters?

Lee Hui Min, a master’s student from NTU and co-author of the study, said she and her team were motivated to determine if watching food consumption videos could have effects on eating behaviour.

“As we only tested a chocolate scent in our study, we are keen to explore if the results might be different for other types of smells, for example, savoury scents like

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