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*Listening, learning,
and living together:
it's the science of life.*

Healthy Solutions to Pregnancy Cravings¹

Rachel Clark and R. Elaine Turner²

Growing up, I always heard that pregnant women craved pickles and ice cream. Pregnancy cravings have become legendary and are completely normal. Almost two-thirds of women experience cravings to some degree, although there is no widely accepted explanation.

Cravings are not a problem unless they cause dietary imbalances. However, a very small percentage of women experience pica, a condition in which they crave non-food items, like dirt or laundry starch. These should obviously *never* be consumed, and consulting a doctor is recommended if a woman does experience such desires. There is currently no identified cause; however, according to research reported in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, pica may be connected to iron deficiency (American Pregnancy Association, 2007).

While not dangerous, food cravings can be annoying. Here are a few techniques that are often helpful in reducing cravings. Eating a complete breakfast can help alleviate midday cravings. Having small, healthy snacks throughout the day, such as fruits, yogurt, and whole-grain crackers, and eating only when you are physically hungry can also help. Drink at least 64 fluid ounces of water a day. Sweets may be hard to cut out completely, so instead eat smaller portions.

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2. Rachel Clark, undergraduate student, and R. Elaine Turner, associate dean, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

And remember to draw on support from family and friends as you strive to keep your diet as healthy as possible for you and your baby.

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To listen to the radio broadcast:

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/cravings.mp3

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/cravings.wav

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