

The Crowding Out Method. What CAN you eat?

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Throughout my years practicing as a dietitian, I have stumbled across people who think that my job involves telling people what they CANNOT eat. This idea of deprivation is surrounded by fear and anxiety when a person considers what they have to eliminate or avoid forever. In fact, it's such a real fear that some people choose not to work with me because they are not ready to give something up.

You know what? ***I totally get it.*** Unless there is a food sensitivity or allergy, *I rarely tell patients they have to give up their favorite foods.* What is the joy in life if we have to deprive ourselves of the things we love?



Instead, I focus on the ***crowding out method...***

What is the crowding out method?

This concept flips the conventional belief about dieting on its head by adding more healthy foods to the diet rather than taking things away. **When we choose to eat more vegetables, fruits, and other nutrient-dense foods, our cravings and desires for less healthy options naturally go away!** After we eat the good stuff, there simply isn't enough room for the junk.

This process should be gradual. Taking small daily steps and focusing on increasing healthy food rather than avoiding every indulgence makes changing your diet much more positive and results in last change. Crowding out also means that you don't have to go without your favorite foods.

For instance, the holidays are a time to enjoy the company of your loved ones and sometimes that involves some indulgence — and that's quite alright!

How can I apply crowding out to my life?

Here are a few quick tips:

1. **Drink lots and lots of water.** Sometimes when we experience cravings or hunger it's really the body telling us that we are thirsty and just slightly dehydrated. By sipping on water throughout the day, we minimize those misread signals and start to snack less between meals. Aim for 2 liters/day.
2. **Eat the nutrient dense, healthy foods first.** Remember when your mom said you could have dessert AFTER you ate your meal? The same concept applies here. Whenever possible, try to heap your plate with healthy choices first and then if you still need the sweet treat or french fries afterward, don't feel bad taking a bite.
3. **Plan ahead.** When you go to the grocery store, plan to purchase healthy options that you can have with you at all times. This could mean bringing a healthy side-dish to a potluck, or stocking your work fridge with veggies and hummus, yogurt, and beef jerky. If you plan ahead, you're more likely to eat the healthy stuff at your fingertips and avoid less healthy alternatives for matters of convenience.

Applying moderation and focusing on what you CAN eat will take you a long way in your journey towards health!