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## ***Do some nutrient deficiencies contribute to hunger?***

Several nutrient deficiencies can increase hunger, either by disrupting appetite-regulating hormones, impairing energy production, or causing blood-sugar instability. Here's a clear breakdown of the most common ones.

### **How Deficiencies Trigger Hunger**

Your appetite is regulated by hormones (ghrelin, leptin, insulin) and by how efficiently your body extracts energy from food. When key nutrients are lacking, your body may “think” it's starving even if you're eating enough calories.

### **Key Nutrient Deficiencies Linked to Increased Hunger**

#### **1. Protein deficiency**

- Protein triggers satiety hormones (PYY, GLP-1) and suppresses ghrelin.
- Low protein → weaker appetite-control signals → constant hunger.

#### **Signs:**

- cravings
- loss of muscle
- low energy

#### **2. Magnesium deficiency**

- Magnesium helps regulate blood sugar and insulin.
- Low magnesium → blood-sugar swings → reactive hunger, especially for carbs.

**Signs:**

- muscle cramps
- sleep problems
- anxiety
- chocolate cravings

**3. Iron deficiency**

- Iron is required for energy production.
- Low iron → fatigue → body seeks quick energy → hunger increases.

**Signs:**

- tiredness
- feeling cold
- pale skin
- shortness of breath

**4. Vitamin D deficiency**

- Vitamin D influences leptin sensitivity (your fullness hormone).
- Low vitamin D can impair appetite regulation.

**Signs:**

- low mood
- fatigue
- frequent illness

**5. B-vitamin deficiencies (especially B1, B3, B6, B12)**

- B vitamins are essential for converting food into usable energy.
- Low B vitamins → low cellular energy → cravings for quick fuel.

**Signs:**

- fatigue
- irritability
- brain fog

**6. Omega-3 deficiency**

- Omega-3s affect leptin and insulin sensitivity.
- Low levels may contribute to poor appetite control and cravings

**Signs:**

- dry skin
- low mood
- inflammation

**7. Zinc deficiency**

- Zinc plays a role in taste perception and appetite hormones.
- Deficiency may distort appetite or increase cravings

**Signs:**

- reduced taste/smell
- frequent illness
- hair loss

**Non-nutrient factors that mimic deficiency-related hunger**

Before assuming deficiencies, consider:

- Poor sleep → raises ghrelin, lowers leptin
- High stress → cortisol increases appetite
- Highly processed foods → rapid digestion leads to rebound hunger
- Dehydration → perceived as hunger

**Should you get tested?**

If you're experiencing persistent hunger, especially with fatigue, cravings, or mood changes, at a minimum get these labs:

- Iron panel
- Vitamin D
- B12
- Magnesium
- Thyroid (because thyroid issues mimic deficiency hunger)