

# Addicted to CHEESE?

Are you a cheese lover? Have you ever tried to give up dairy and found that it was quite easy to give up milk and even ice cream, but extremely difficult to quit the cheese? Milk is pretty boring, and ice cream can be replaced with sorbet. But, there is nothing quite like the combination of fat, sodium, textures and flavors of cheese. But, there is more to it. There is actually an addictive chemical in dairy. More on that in a minute.

## How is Cheese Made?

After the dairy farmer extracts the milk from the cow, it is put into large tubs. Bacteria is added to start the fermentation process—fermenting the sugars in the milk. Then rennet is added to coagulate the milk. Rennet is an enzyme that comes from the 4th stomach of a newborn calf that is dead. However, since getting rennet is an expensive and cumbersome process many cheese farmers now use genetically modified rennet. The more traditional farmers who pride themselves on being all natural still use rennet from the dead calf's 4th stomach.

The cheese then coagulates and thickens enough to be formed. Then the whey is drained out. Next, a whole bunch of salt is added to stop the bacteria from fermenting more and turning the cheese to mush. We now have formed cheese.

Cheeses come in a variety of flavors and textures, but they all have three major things in common: fat, sodium and casomorphin. Cheese contains a chemical called casein. When we eat cheese and the casein protein is digested and broken down, it forms casomorphin, which is an opiate. The casomorphin molecules then go into the blood, up to the brain, crosses the



blood/brain barrier and attaches to the very same part of the brain receptors that heroin would attach to.

It is argued that casein is naturally in milk to make sure a baby will want to nurse, get its nourishment and have a contented feeling afterwards, thus ensuring it survives and thrives. But, at some point, the baby is weaned, just as a person weans off a drug. As humans we get weaned off our mother's breast. But, then we continue to get the milk and opiates (and over 60 different hormones) from another source—cows.

So, if you've ever tried to give up dairy for health reasons, such as allergies, migraines or asthma, but found it just impossible due to cravings, now you know you're not as weak-willed as you thought. The brain always remembers the sources of opiates and creates extreme cravings. ♦