Hungry? Then just go and smell the roses

GUILTY PLEASURE: Dr Eva Kemps yesterday with a common temptation, a cheeseburger.

REBECCA GILL
If you want to resist your junk food craving then just imagine smelling something else, new research says.

A study conducted by Dr Eva Kemps, of Flinders University, is the first to find that olfactory distractions – those relating to smell – can work in minimising food cravings.

Smell distractions could be thinking about many things non-food related such as freshly mown grass or the fragrance of clean, tumble-dried clothes.

The study was conducted on women as cravings don’t normally affect men.

Dr Kemps also tested visual distractions, like imagining a rainbow or a hot-air balloon, and noise distractions, such as a dog barking.

Subjects were first asked to imagine a delicious food to bring on a craving then complete either a visual, auditory or olfactory imagery task – imagining smelling, hearing or visualising something non-food related.

They then rated how intense their craving was. Dr Kemps said, “The visual and the olfactory imagery reduced the cravings a lot more than the auditory task,” she said.

“(With cravings) you picture and smell something, but not necessarily think of how something sounds.”

She suggested people having problems resisting temptation could learn from the study and try adopting its findings.