

Eating Strategies for Weight Management

Weight reduction can be difficult. This leaflet provides information on *how* to lose weight, focusing on the psychological and behavioral aspects of weight management.

Try these strategies to alter your environment to encourage healthy eating.

- **Use smaller plates and bowls.** They discourage overeating.
- **Keep treat and snack foods out of sight** and out of mind. Seal in non-transparent containers and place on top shelves of the pantry. Wrap tempting leftovers in tinfoil and store at the back of the fridge.
- **Use tall, slim glasses** rather than short, wide tumblers. Place healthy, low-energy foods at the front of the pantry and fridge.
- **Use smaller serving spoons** so you'll take smaller servings.
- **Make snacking inconvenient.** Put snack and treat foods somewhere you have to get up and walk to – or better still, don't have them in the house, so if you really want a treat, you have to go out to get it.
- **Repackage foods from large boxes and packets** into smaller zip-lock bags, and hide spare packets at the back of the cupboard. Or just buy individually wrapped.
- **Avoid temptation.** Don't drive past the takeaway shop, don't walk through the kitchen, turn off the TV to avoid food adverts – develop a plan to avoid your weaknesses. Try replacing the cookie jar on the kitchen bench with a bowl of fruit.
- **Make eating 'seconds' inconvenient.** Leave serving dishes in the kitchen – the walk from the table deters overeating. Or try putting the leftovers in the fridge once you've dished up. Save money by using your leftovers for future meals.
- **Don't eat in front of the TV, computer or while reading.** Eat at the dinner table, on a plate.
- **Eat in the same place for all meals.** Designate a room where all eating will occur. This discourages mindless eating.



- **Plan your shopping.** Bring a limited amount of money with you to the store, so you won't be tempted to spend more. Make a shopping list and stick to it. Look for the Heart Foundation Tick if you get stuck.
- **Do not beat yourself up if you slip up.** Everyone overeats at times. Live by the philosophy "everything in moderation."
- **Choose a healthier replacement**
If you crave cheese, try a low fat version (eg. Edam). If you crave biscuits, try fresh fruit, bread or a low fat baked item (eg. Arnott's Snack Right). If you crave lollies, try dried fruit. If you crave ice cream, try a lower energy version (eg. frozen yoghurt, ice blocks, flavored yoghurt). If you crave chippies, try air-popped popcorn.
- **Accept** food cravings as a normal part of living in a food-oriented society. Food is all around us. You sometimes can't control the craving, but you can control your reaction. Try to understand your cravings in relation to your mood or situation.
- **Look at cravings as suggestions, not commands,** to overindulge. When you feel a craving, decide how you want to deal with it. You can choose to eat a little, a lot or none.
- **Cravings will pass.** Cravings are not hunger. They usually go away with distractions.
- **Aim for moderation instead of abstinence.** Your favorite foods may make you feel great. Enjoy them occasionally.



- **Deal with emotions,** such as anger or sadness, in a way that doesn't involve food.
- **Stay active.** Moving is a great way to keep you from eating, and it is essential for good health.
- **Practice Mindful Eating (see above)**

Top 10 Reasons Not to Diet

Diets don't work.
Dieting is dangerous.
Diets are expensive and without value.
Dieting zaps your energy and strength.
Dieting disrupts normal eating, causes bingeing, overeating and chaotic eating.

Dieting can stress you out.
Dieting can cause you to think about food too much.
Dieting decreases self-esteem.
Dieting stunts mental and physical growth in young people.
Dieting makes people more judgmental of themselves and others.

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Pay attention to eating

Don't do any other activities while you're eating. Watching television distracts your mind from the task at hand: eating. This means you will eat more food because your brain isn't fully aware of the amount it's receiving. Eating at the table forces you to pay attention to the food in front of you.

Taste your food

Slow down. Digestion starts in your mouth. Tasting your food is part of the experience. Chew your food 30 times each mouthful. You should not be able to identify the chewed food before you swallow. Try slowing down by

putting your fork down while you're chewing. Swallow before you take another mouthful.



If you are trying to achieve a healthy weight, you may already be aware of some basic healthy eating principles. These include appropriate portions, cutting back on fats and sugars and including adequate exercise. But, there are lots of other factors that can make it more difficult to control our weight. Humans spend a lot of their life thinking, gathering, preparing and eating food. This means eating is a very personal part of you.

Mindful Eating

Mindful eating means "Allowing your body and mind to fully experience the entire eating process." When we haven't had the *experience* of eating, we don't feel satisfied. This is at the heart of healthy eating. No matter what your particular struggles are, you can benefit from practicing mindful eating.

Try using these strategies to help you be more mindful around eating.

Feel hunger

Physical hunger appears slowly after a meal. Hunger involves a rumbling, empty stomach. The feeling disappears after eating. Eat only when you are hungry.

Prepare your food

This assists your body in the *experience* of eating. Also, you will have more control over what goes into your food and how it is prepared.. Healthy meals can still be assembled from simple convenience foods. (eg. whole meal rolls, microwave chicken breast, frozen vegetables, salad-in-a-bag)



Feel satisfied

It takes 20 minutes for your brain to become aware of food in your stomach. If it senses you have eaten too much, your body gets negative signals. They include being tired, sleepy and feeling tension in your stomach. Aim to feel just satisfied.

Eat only what you enjoy

You may often eat simply because "it's there". Have you ever eaten the last cookie on the tray, even when you didn't really like the flavor? Eating foods you don't like is a waste of calories and enjoyment.

Enjoy whatever you eat

Savor every mouthful as if it were your last. Enjoying food is part of the *experience of eating*. If you feel guilty or angry about what you eat, you will not feel satisfied

The 5 D's – to disarm your cravings

Delay – wait 10 minutes

Distract –concentrate on something else

Distance – do not keep temptation on hand; make yourself leave your environment to get the food.

Determine – think about how much you really want it

Decide –know how much to eat; if you choose to eat something you crave, remember to enjoy it!

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Stimulus Control

The word “stimulus” refers to the things that encourage you to eat. They “stimulate” eating. There are two different types of stimuli:

Internal - These come from inside of you. The main internal types of eating stimulus are cravings and habits.

External - These come from outside of you. This is the place you live and the people you are with that stimulate eating.

Internal Stimulus: Cravings

People sometimes have strong desires for particular foods. Food cravings happen for a variety of reasons:

Your body may physically need a certain nutrient.

For example, you may crave sweets when you are tired because your body physically needs carbohydrate (quick energy).

Your brain may be addicted to a certain nutrient.

A common nutrient addiction is alcohol. However, your brain can also experience addictions to fats and carbohydrates.

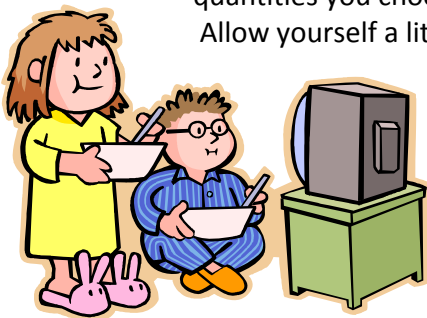
You craving may be emotional

If a craving has an emotional base, food generally does not address the craving. You will eat and still feel “hungry”. The craving must be addressed by dealing with your emotions.

Try these strategies to help you gain control over your cravings.

- **Eat at least three well-balanced meals a day.** Do not skip meals – you will just make yourself hungrier for the next meal, causing you probably to overeat.
- **Stop labelling foods as “bad” or “forbidden”.** It is not the food that is the problem; it is the quantities you choose to consume.

Allow yourself a little of you favourite foods once in a while and make them special.



Internal Stimulus: Habits

These are the behaviours you are most comfortable doing right now. In fact, you are so comfortable doing them, you don’t even have to think about it anymore. It happens automatically. In order to make major changes, you will need to form new habits.

Try these strategies to form new habits.

- **Decide on your motivator.** In order to change your behaviour, you have to *want* to change. A strong motivator is essential. Preferably, choose a positive motivator, such as being alive to see your grandchildren or setting a good example to your kids.
- **Get into a routine.** This could be exercising at a similar time every day. It could involve planning healthy snacks or packing lunches every evening. Try eating all your meals at home in one room of the house.
- **Adopt positive thinking.** Instead of thinking “I *have* to eat this carrot”, try thinking “I can eat this carrot to help me reach my goals.
- **Monitor your behaviours.** In order to break old habits, you need to know what they are. Keep a food and activity diary or a food and emotion diary. Keeping these sorts of records is directly associated with better weight loss.
- **Get support.** Let friends and family know what changes you’re making. Then you’re accountable to someone.

External Stimulus: Environment

The environment we live in affects our food choices a lot. Many of our environments have programmed us to eat “mindlessly”, eat too