



## **FOOD AND BEHAVIOUR**

Eating well and looking after your body is important for good health. Normal eating means you will have a healthy relationship with food. A healthy relationship with food means you may do any of the following:

- Eat something at least three times a day
- Occasionally overeat or under eat
- Decide to eat less of the foods you like as you know you can eat them again another time
- Say no to food you don't want to eat but being flexible in choosing when and when not to eat
- Eat a variety of foods regularly and in sufficient portions to prevent the urge to overeat or binge later
- Not always eating to lose weight, but knowing that you can change your weight if you need to

If you are concerned that your eating behaviour doesn't fit this sort of pattern there is a chance you are under or overeating.

This may be because there are reasons other than hunger that lead you to choose whether to eat or not. If this is the case you may become heavier or lose weight unintentionally, or even do the opposite to what you wanted.

Learning to recognise the difference between hunger and fullness is one step towards learning to eat the right amount of food.

## **HUNGER AND FULLNESS**

The really important question to ask yourself before you eat is "Am I really hungry?" Try to think about the physical sensations you are experiencing. If you aren't really hungry, what else may be going on? You may be eating in response to habit, boredom, emotions or stress.

People experience hunger and fullness in different ways. Do you recognise your own feelings below?

### **Hunger?**

- Rumbling stomach
- Empty feeling
- Time for my meal
- Restless and loss of concentration

### **Fullness?**

- Bloating feeling
- Can't eat any more
- Plate is empty
- Uncomfortable
- Feel sick

It can be helpful when you are trying to lose weight to use a scale to start to recognise when you are hungry or full.

Before and after you eat try to rate your hunger and fullness on the scale below:

1. **Very hungry:** starving; desperate. Your stomach is “screaming”
2. **Moderately hungry:** ready to eat. Your stomach is “talking”
3. **Mildly hungry:** beginning hunger. Your stomach is “whispering”
4. **Neutral:** You feel no sensations of hunger or fullness
5. **Mildly full:** You feel satisfied
6. **Very full:** Your stomach is beginning to feel a bit bloated
7. **Much too full:** Your stomach feels stuffed

### **You should try and aim for 2.5 to 5.5**

The scale can be difficult to use at first, but it can be a helpful way to recognise when you are ready to eat and when you are ready to stop eating.

If you are regularly falling to a one on the scale, you may need to think about adding healthy snacks or using more filling meal choices. If you are regularly eating to a six or seven on the scale, consider slowing down your eating and look for ways to reduce your portions.