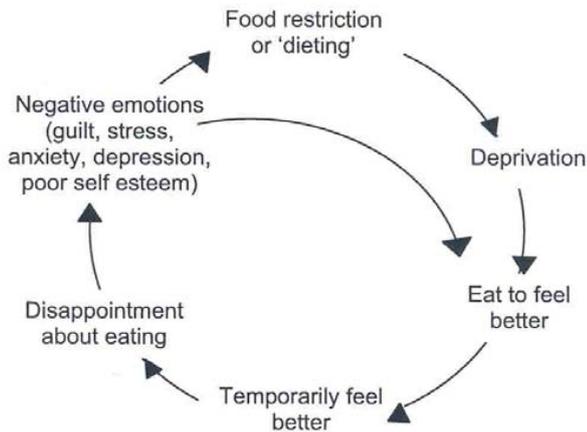


## The Dieting Cycle

### What is the dieting cycle?



The dieting cycle is a trap that many people get caught in after repeated attempts at 'dieting' or restricting food intake to lose weight.

The cycle goes like this:

1. You restrict food to try to lose weight.
2. You feel deprived and your desire for the foods you are restricting increases.
3. You give in to temptation and eat the forbidden food. You might think to yourself "I shouldn't be having this". You eat it quickly and don't enjoy eating it. You will probably eat a lot of the food because you think "What the hell. I've had one I might as well have the whole lot."
4. For a short time you might feel better.

5. Then your feelings of guilt make you feel uncomfortable and you may feel like a failure and angry at yourself for not having the willpower to resist.
6. You might restrict yourself again to make up for the binge you recently had.
7. The cycle starts again.

### Other reasons dieting doesn't work

- Fad diets severely restrict your food choices. They are difficult to continue for very long. Your body doesn't get the energy and nutrients it needs so you can't function well.
- Dieting damages your self-esteem by setting you up for failure. You blame yourself for not having 'willpower' when it is really the diet that is the problem. You don't fail at dieting; the diet fails you.
- Restricting your eating too much can make it really hard to have a healthy weight. It produces such a strong drive to eat that it can make you feel out of control with your eating. Over-eating and binge eating are the body's "natural" responses to starvation and is what the body does to protect itself.



- Dieting can lead to an unhealthy relationship with food. Food becomes the enemy and deprives you of the joy and satisfaction from eating.
- Dieting can lead to obsessive and unhealthy behaviours such as skipping meals, fasting, bingeing, excessive exercising or abuse of medications. Dieting can also lead to eating disorders such as bulimia, anorexia nervosa or binge eating disorder.

### **How to Break the Cycle?**

#### **Eat for health instead of weight loss**

Avoid dieting. Why keep doing something that doesn't work? Make food choices that nourish your body, taste good and make you feel well. But remember, you don't have to be perfect all the time. It's what you eat consistently over time that matters.

#### **Respect your body**

It is hard to stop dieting if you are too critical of your body and are striving for an unrealistic weight. Accept your genetics. It is unrealistic for a person who has a shoe size of eight to try to squeeze into a size six. The same goes for body size. Respect your body as it is and treat it with care.

#### **Make peace with food**

Avoid labelling foods as 'good' or 'bad'. Labelling a food as 'bad' suggests this food should be forbidden and that if you eat that food you will be a 'bad' person.

There are no foods that you can never have. All foods are available to you and can be included in moderation, even when you are trying to lose weight. Once you realise this, you won't have to eat particular foods just because they are in front of you, but only you actually feel like them.

#### **Deal with negative emotions without using food**

Everyone feels anxious, bored, angry and lonely at times. It's a normal part of life. However, this is not a reason to eat. Food won't fix any of these feelings. It may comfort or distract for a short time but food won't solve the problem. In fact, eating for emotional reasons may make you feel worse in the long run. Find ways to comfort, nurture or distract yourself without using food.



## **Get back in touch with your body's signals of hunger and fullness.**

To get started:

Eat at least 3 meals a day at around the same time each day (breakfast, lunch and dinner). This will tell your stomach to expect food at these times and you will begin to feel hungry at these times. This will also make hunger much more predictable.

Plan these 3 meals based on the five foods groups. The five food groups provide the energy and nutrients your body needs. When your body gets what it needs, strong cravings are likely to lessen in frequency and intensity.

Tune in to your body's signals that tell you it is comfortably full. Slow down and

think about how the food tastes. Think about how your stomach feels during a meal. Pause half way through and think about your level of fullness. If you are satisfied, stop eating, even if there is more food on your plate.

### **Exercise and feel the difference**

Instead of exercising to lose weight, focus on how your body feels to be active. Focusing on how energised and mentally alert you feel when you exercise is far more motivating than a goal to lose weight.

***For further information contact your Dietitian or Nutritionist:***

---

---

### **Things I can do to improve my health:**

1.

---

2.

---

3.

---

4.

---