

# Hunger & Fullness

## Hunger is normal!

Food is essential to our survival. We have a powerful biological drive to eat.

## When hunger is denied...

- hunger signals can fade away
- our body lowers its energy requirements
- we are disconnected from our true needs
- the belief that we can't trust ourselves around food is reinforced

## Lost the signal?

There are several factors that interfere with our hunger signals. They include dieting, busy lifestyle, skipping breakfast, heavy caffeine consumption, certain medications and stress.

## How to honor hunger

- Begin to listen for it and recognize the signals.
- Don't let yourself get overly hungry.
- Tune in to the direct experience of your body.
- Be patient. Don't panic.
- Use the Hunger & Fullness Scale.

## Feeling your fullness

Many of us cannot recognize comfortable fullness. Reasons may include:

- history of dieting mindless or emotional eating
- eating when overly hungry
- being taught to clean your plate
- respecting the economics and value of food
- experience with food insecurity

## How fullness works

- The brain and digestive system communicate to regulate fullness.
- When you eat, nerve receptors in your stomach send signals to the brain that you are starting to feel full.
- This feedback loop takes time. It can take 20 to 30 minutes to feel your fullness.

## Important reminder!

The ability to respect your fullness requires giving yourself permission to eat all foods. How can you stop eating in response to fullness when you believe you won't be able to eat that food again?

## Hunger & Fullness Scale

Our mind and body function best when we stay within the 3 to 7 range. Respond to your hunger and fullness cues before reaching extreme hunger or extreme fullness. When we wait too long to listen to our body's signals (1 and 2 on the scale), this can leave us feeling out of control and more likely to eat past the point of fullness (8 to 10 on the scale).

0	Painfully hungry. This is primal hunger, which is very intense and urgent.
1	Ravenous and irritable. Anxious to eat.
2	Very hungry. Looking forward to a hearty meal or snack.
3	Hungry and ready to eat, but without urgency. It's a polite hunger.
4	Subtly hungry, slightly empty.
5	Neutral. Neither hungry nor full.
6	Beginning to feel emerging fullness.
7	Comfortable fullness. You feel satisfied and content.
8	A little too full. This doesn't feel pleasant, but not yet an unpleasant experience.
9	Very full, too full. You feel uncomfortable; need to unbutton pants or remove belt.
10	Painfully full, stuffed. You may feel nauseous.