



What's Driving Your Hunger?

Your body has two different drives to eat. Learning to recognize the difference between the two can ensure your efforts to manage your appetite and weight are targeted at the right place.

Body Hunger

The first type of hunger is '*body hunger*' which is the drive to eat when you feel physically hungry. It is managed by hormones in your gut, blood sugar and fat tissue. Your pattern of eating and what you eat can have a significant impact on your hunger level causing cravings and other problem eating behaviours.

5 ways to manage body hunger:

1. Eat regularly - this means 3 meals per day and for some people snacks in between meals.
2. Eat balanced meals that contain a source of protein and carbohydrate help manage hormones that help us to feel full longer.
3. Enjoy fruit, vegetables and high fibre foods as they are great sources of fibre which help control body hunger.
4. Work to moderate your portions because over eating (even the healthy stuff) can drive up your appetite and cravings.
5. Limit your intake of high sugar, high fat foods along with calorie containing beverages because they can wreak havoc with hunger and cravings.
6. After you have worked to manage your 'body hunger', you may still find you struggle at times with cravings or eating when you are not hungry. That is the time to tackle your 'reward hunger'.

Reward Hunger

Reward hunger is ruled by the brain and includes emotional, stress, habitual and mindless overeating. When this drive is in gear, we eat even though we are not physically hungry and can even eat unconsciously which wreaks havoc on your weight management efforts. When our reward hunger drive is activated, we look for foods that are pleasurable. That means foods higher in sugar, fat, salt, or with a crunchy texture will have more appeal. Let's face it, eating celery sticks will not have the same rewarding effect as chocolate during a craving.

Reward hunger is usually a sign your brain is overwhelmed, stressed, checked out or simply surviving. In this state your brain sees food as a way to cope with the situation or emotion and very susceptible to impulsive behavior or immediate gratification. This explains why you might 'know' what to eat but make totally opposite choices.

Because reward hunger isn't related to your body's physical need for food, learning to identify what your triggers and what actual need your body is trying to satisfy is key to managing it.

Tips for Tackling Reward Hunger

1. **Normalize it:** We all eat for reward, emotion; it's the frequency that determines if it's a problem eating behaviour or not.
2. **Start with body hunger:** Make sure your cravings aren't a symptom of actual physical hunger. Go back to the basics to ensure you're eating regular balanced meals and that your meals include fibre and protein sources.
3. **Identify your triggers:** When a craving hits, take a moment to identify what situation, emotion or environment trigger might be driving your problem eating behaviour. Then you can create an action plan to help you deal with those situations or emotions. When the craving hits, ask yourself what 'need are you trying to meet?' For example are you tired, bored or sad.



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4. **Create a temptation-free environment:** Even those with the best of intentions will be tempted to eat highly palatable foods under certain situations. You can avoid falling into temptation by making sure your environment is clear of your favorite comfort foods. Clean them out when you're feeling strong and motivated.
5. **Find non-food ways to activate your reward pathways:** Reward hunger is fueled by your brain's drive to find ways to increase your feel good hormones. Unfortunately these effects are not long lasting and usually result in more cravings. Take time each day to reward yourself with natural pleasures such as laughter, nature, music, movement, connection with others, quiet time, etc.