

E4YH – Is it hunger?

Patient Name:

Date:

Health Professional Name:

Designation:

Contact:

Hunger is your body's way of telling you that you are ready for food. However in reality, there are many reasons that people eat aside from being physically hungry – this is called non-hungry eating.

Common reasons for non-hungry eating:

- Boredom
- Social events
- Eating too fast
- Cultural expectations
- Emotions – sad, stressed, happy
- Enjoying the taste
- Availability – because it's there
- Habit - snacks with TV or at work desk
- Reward - went to the gym, productive day at work
- Parents told us to eat everything on the plate
- Confusing hunger with thirst
- Marketing/advertising
- Filling up but not feeling satisfied.

While occasional non-hungry eating is okay, if it happens often it can mean that you are giving your body more fuel than it needs, and this may be detrimental to your health and goals.

By learning to pay mindful attention to when and why you are eating, then you can identify any unhelpful non-hungry eating and make a plan to address this.

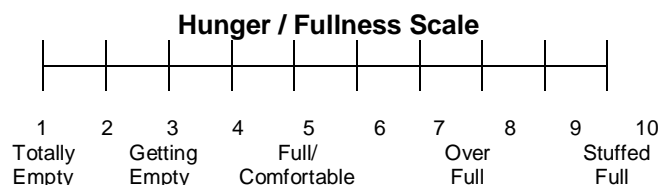
To help you become more aware of the difference between being hungry and not hungry when eating, fill in the My Eating Awareness Diary on the next page. Use the simple **hunger/ fullness scale** to check your level of hunger.

On the My Eating Awareness Diary, please fill in the table with:

1. The **time, date, place, activity** as well as the **food/ drink** consumed.
2. Where you are on the hunger/ fullness scale **before** and **after** eating.

- If you are **not physically hungry** before you start eating, think about why you are eating and write it down eg feeling tired, bored, upset, because food is there or eating out of habit.
- Record any **thoughts** or **feelings** you may have had after eating and also your speed of eating.

After filling in the table for three – four days, identify if there are areas where you can make changes.



This is an example of what the My Eating Awareness Diary will look like completed:

Time/ date/ place/ activity	Thoughts & feelings before eating/ drinking	Hunger/ fullness scale before eating	Food/ drink consumed	Hunger/ fullness scale after eating	Thoughts & feelings after eating/ drinking	Speed of eating – slow/ moderate/ fast/ very fast
e.g. 11am Work lunch room chatting/eating	e.g. Morning tea was provided and I ate it "because it was there"	e.g. 5	e.g. 2 pieces of slice, 1 piece of fruit, 3 small savouries	e.g. 10	e.g. I feel disappointed with myself for eating as much as I did. There were lots of choices and I had to try them all	e.g. Fast
e.g. 1pm Kitchen table by self	e.g. Lunch time – starting to feel hungry	e.g. 3	e.g. 1 tuna & salad sandwich, 1 apple, glass of water	e.g. 5	e.g. Feeling satisfied and good about myself for eating when I am feeling hungry and not over eating	e.g. Moderate/fast

Below is a question you can ask yourself if you notice you are doing a lot of non-hungry eating:

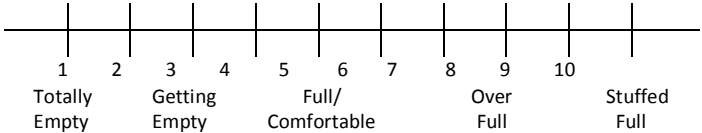
If I am not hungry then it's not food I need right now, so what is it that I need?

Consider the following if you are:

- Eating out of boredom or habit – can you do something else? Go for a walk, do some gardening, change the task you are doing?
- Eating because of your emotions – sad, angry, stressed, happy – what is causing the emotions? Can you do something else about them rather than eat?
- Overfull after eating – slow down the pace, serve a smaller portion to start with and get more if you are genuinely hungry afterwards
- Eating when not hungry – why are you eating? Can you delay eating your snack/meal for 30 minutes until you may be hungry
- Social events – can you choose just what you really feel like? Or move away from the food if you are not hungry.

My eating awareness diary

Hunger / Fullness Scale



Time/ date/ place/ activity	Thoughts & feelings before eating/ drinking	Hunger/ fullness scale before eating	Food/ drink consumed	Hunger/ fullness scale after eating	Thoughts & feelings after eating/ drinking	Speed of eating – slow/ moderate/ fast/ very fast

Time/ Date/ Place/ Activity	Thoughts & feelings before eating/ drinking	Hunger/ fullness scale before eating	Food/ drink consumed	Hunger/ fullness scale after eating	Thoughts & Feelings after eating/ drinking	Speed of eating – slow/ moderate/ fast/ very fast

This nutrition information has been developed for use by Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand – Waitematā Dietitians. It may be used by other healthcare professionals if appropriate training has been given. Please consult Te Whatu Ora Waitematā Dietitians if you have questions about using this information.