

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HUNGER



It can be useful to reflect on your thoughts and feelings to recognise when you are eating for reasons other than physical hunger. Sometimes emotions can trigger hunger, therefore it is important to identify what drives your eating, especially if you're overweight, obese or are trying to maintain a healthy weight.

Below are pointers to help you understand if you are feeling physical or emotional hunger, and make conscious food choices.

Physical Hunger	Emotional Hunger
Comes on slowly and you can wait a while before you eat	Comes on suddenly and urgently and needs satisfying now
You're responding to your body's needs and a physical sensation e.g. stomach pangs or rumbling, a headache	You're responding to a feeling, e.g. boredom, upset, tired or lonely
Any food will solve real hunger, e.g. a banana, a healthy plate, salad or sandwich	You want a certain type of food and it tends to be a less healthy option than an apple!
Comes on gradually. A feeling you need some food quite soon, but you'd be satisfied by any food	A persistent thought in your head that won't go away. A craving for a particular food or drink
You eat with awareness of what is in your mouth e.g. the flavours	You eat quickly, you may not notice or even really taste the food
You feel satisfied and full after eating	You want more, or more of a different food e.g. you've had salty food and now you want sweet food
You have no negative emotions about what you have eaten, e.g. you don't feel guilty because you were hungry	You feel bad about eating, you may feel frustrated with yourself or guilty