

Identifying Emotional Eating

Is your hunger physical or emotional?

Many people with weight concerns eat because of stress, boredom, anger, loneliness, joy or reward. Often, they may not be aware that their eating is emotionally driven. Perhaps some of you hunger may actually be emotional and not physical. It can be hard to tell the difference between the two. Answer the following questions to see if you may be eating for emotional reasons. When you answer, consider what happens *most* of the time.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1. Do you eat when you are not hungry?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Do you tend to snack more when you are alone?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Do you eat more when you are at home?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Is it a habit to snack at a certain time of the day?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Do you treat yourself routinely with food?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Is eating a favorite food one of the most pleasant things you do for yourself?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Do you routinely clean your plate, even if you are full?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Do you have a hard time recognizing when you are <i>physically</i> hungry or full?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Do you pay attention to whether you are hungry or full before eating?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Do you eat when you are stressed, even if you are not hungry?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Do you feel hunger in your mouth, rather than in your stomach?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you often eat for emotional reasons?

If you answered *yes* to three or more of the questions, you may be doing more than occasional emotional eating. The more *yes* answers, the more likely you are an emotional eater. It is important to recognize when you eat for emotional reasons because this type of eating can lead to many unneeded calories. For many people, cutting out most of the emotional eating (occasional emotional eating is normal) can lead to a slow, natural weight loss.

Distinguishing between the two hunger types

One quick way to tell the difference between emotionally driven hunger and true physical hunger, is to see where in your body you feel hungry. True physical hunger should be felt in the stomach. If you feel hunger in the chest, throat or mouth, what you may be feeling is emotional hunger instead. A lack of physical hunger signals means you may want to eat for emotional reasons.

Difficulty stopping at comfortable fullness

If you are chronically unable to stop eating at comfortable fullness, even though you recognize when you are full, then you are most likely overeating for emotional reasons. Just because something tastes good doesn't mean you have to finish it! Common reasons for eating past comfortable fullness are:

- A history of depriving yourself of food (during times of dieting or cutting back, for example.
- Your parents deprived you of food (especially if they were concerned about your weight as a child)
- Procrastinating something that's coming after the meal
- Depression, or other brain chemistry imbalance