

Am I Really Hungry?

The sensation of hunger is instinctual. For many people, the first twinge of hunger sends them searching for food, often before they need to eat. Feeling hungry at the start of a meal is good, but eating every time you feel hungry can result in overeating.

You can monitor your appetite and eat accordingly. Before a meal, rate your hunger on a scale of zero to 4:

- 0 = not hungry
- 1 = slightly hungry
- 2 or 3 = moderately hungry
- 4 = overly hungry, starving.

Your goal should be to eat when you are between 2 and 3. If you're eating at 0 or 1, it may be for an emotional reason (such as anxiety) or a situational reason (seeing a food commercial on TV). Meanwhile, if your hunger level is 4, you may be vulnerable to overeating and should pay attention to eating slowly. And try not to go for long periods between meals.

A registered dietitian can help you monitor your appetite and eat in quantities and at times that are best for you.