Obesity Services

Reviewing your food diary...

Having completed your food diary, it is important to analyse your choices and recognise habits that may hinder your weight loss attempts. Any improvements that you can make to the way you eat will help you not only to lose weight but also to maintain any weight loss.

Eating pattern

Do you spread your eating over the entire day?
If you don't eat regular meals, you may find that you get hungry at certain times of the day and then over eat in order to satisfy this hunger. A common mistake in attempting to control weight is to miss meals altogether or try to last as long as possible without eating. Unfortunately, this could lead to feelings of hunger which in turn could lead to an impulsive purchase of an energy dense food. Studies support that people who consume regular meals such as breakfast, lunch and dinner are more likely to be successful with weight loss.

Do you eat breakfast?
A filling, healthy breakfast is a vital part of a successful weight-loss plan. Eating breakfast can kick start your metabolism following the overnight fast. Studies have demonstrated improved concentration, memory and motor skills during the morning after eating breakfast. If you skip breakfast at the moment, plan a healthy breakfast for everyday next week. Eating a healthy breakfast is an important step to long-term success.

Do you eat in-between meals?
Eating in-between meals is a sign that you are either eating for reasons other than hunger or that you need to eat something a little more filling at meal times. Healthy snacks such as fruit are fine but avoid sweets, crisps, biscuits or cakes which are high in calories but offer little appetite satisfaction. Review your meal time choices. Are you having a balance of protein and carbohydrate? High fibre and protein options are known to keep you fuller for longer.

Do you eat more on a certain day or at weekends?
Some food diaries show a healthy eating pattern throughout the week but then an unhealthy one on the weekend. Often people are restrained during their working week when there is more structure in place but then on weekends when there is more flexibility and a higher chance of eating out, people treat themselves and then sabotage their healthy eating plan.
Are there days when you tend to eat more?
Think about the reasons why and what you should try doing differently. Are there triggers leading to you overeating? Eating out with family and friends or when you are home, alone and bored.

At what time of the day, do you eat the unhealthiest food?
Are there times of the day when you eat high-fat, high calorie foods? Your food diary will help you to identify this. Some people find it more difficult to control what they eat during the day. Others find that they eat the wrong foods at night whilst watching TV. If there is a time of the day for you where you particularly eat unhealthy choices, you can concentrate your efforts on changing it.

Understanding habitual eating

Do you only eat when you are physically hungry?
A lot of the food and drink we consume each day is a habit relating more to times of the day, places and people than to a feeling of hunger. Using the hunger score to ensure that you only eat when you are actually hungry can reduce the times you eat for comfort, stress or because you think you are bored. By focusing on only eating when you are feeling physically hungry, you can significantly reduce how much energy you take in and this helps you to lose weight.

Where do you tend to eat most of your food?
Are you eating on the move? Maybe continuing to work while you eat lunch, or eating in the car? People who are organised and make time to sit down and concentrate on what they are eating tend to enjoy the food. Slow your eating, if you eat quickly, you are more likely to eat too much.

When you are in a petrol station or newsagents, do you routinely buy chocolate, crisps or a snack? If so, do you eat the snack straight away or save it for later? Do you eat the snack because you are hungry or because it was there? Do you snack between meals? When do you eat them and what are they? Use your diary to help you identify non-meal time eating and drinking.
What is your unconscious energy intake like?

Are there any triggers to you overeating? You eat when you are stressed, angry, sad, happy or lonely?

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