What’s Eating You?

There’s one vital reason why you should eat: You Feel Hungry. However, many people use food to cope with boredom, stress, anger or other negative emotions. This is emotional eating, and it can lead to gaining unwanted weight.

Hunger vs. emotional eating:
Emotions can be so tied to food that you reach for treats without realizing it. Learn to recognize the difference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HUNGER</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL EATING</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occurs gradually</td>
<td>Comes on suddenly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You stop eating when you’re full</td>
<td>You crave specific foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any food will do</td>
<td>You keep eating specific foods</td>
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Ask yourself:
Find out if you’re an emotional eater. For one week, keep a food journal with these three columns:
1. What food I ate
2. How much I ate
3. How I felt when I ate (hungry, tired, happy, lonely, bored, etc.)

After one week, look for patterns. Do you tend to eat sweets when you feel tired? Do double chocolate chip cookies or potato chips look good whenever you’re stressed? Recognizing emotional eating habits and the foods that trigger them is the first step in changing your relationship with food.

To overcome these habits:
- Tame stress with a walk or a talk with a friend rather than with food. Ask yourself if you’re truly hungry before you reach for food.
- Don’t buy your trigger junk food.
- Replace junk food with healthier foods (e.g., an apple instead of a cookie).

Sometimes emotional eating signals a more serious mental health issue such as depression. If you feel your habit is beyond your control, talk to your provider.

How much do you really spend on food?
It’s hard to save money when you don’t really know how much you spend.

Put all your grocery receipts in an envelope for one month – from the grocery stores, gas stations, discount stores, restaurants and other stores where you buy food.

How can you change your spending habits?
1. Make a plan – it’s the key to real savings. Planning meals and snacks can cut your spending up to 50% if you stick to the list. It helps stop impulse buying at the store.

2. Find the right stores for the best prices – some food items can be expensive at gas stations and convenience stores. Nonfood items such as shampoo and cleaning supplies can be expensive at grocery stores.

Top ten for kids
Eat right with colorful fruits and vegetables: apricots, broccoli, peaches, carrots, kiwi, romaine and leaf lettuce, strawberries, spinach, oranges and sweet potatoes

These fruits and vegetables are nutrient dense – they have lots of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients in a serving compared to other foods.

- Enjoy a dish of canned apricots or peaches with your lunch. Buy fruit packed in 100% juice.
- Chop dark green leaf lettuce or romaine lettuce and add to tacos, quesadillas or sandwiches.
• Bake a dark orange sweet potato. Top with chopped ham and shredded cheese for a quick lunch.

**SWEET POTATO FRIES**
1 1/2 pounds sweet potatoes (about 4 medium
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1/4 teaspoon salt

Dip:
1/4 cup light mayo
1 tablespoon ketchup
1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper, chili powder, or paprika

Preheat oven to 425°F. Rinse potatoes under running water. Peel if desired or scrub potatoes well. Cut the potatoes in half lengthwise. Lay each potato half flat and slice into half-round shapes about 1/4” thick. Combine potatoes, oil, and salt in a bowl. Stir so potatoes are covered with oil. Grease cookie sheet with oil and lay potato slices in a single layer. Bake for about 30 minutes, turning after 15 minutes. While potatoes are baking, mix the dip ingredients. Serve immediately. Serves 6.

**Better-For-You Fats**
For many years, fat got a bad rap as a food substance to avoid. Fat-free foods were all the rage in the late 1980s when scientists detailed the hazards of excess butter, oil, saturated fat and any foods containing these ingredients.

Today, fat is rightfully acknowledged as an essential component of a healthful diet and as a factor for maintaining good health. But not all fats are created equal. What remains important is the type of fat we choose and the quantity we eat.

**Which type is better?** We need to select more of the “good” unsaturated fats from oils, nuts, seeds and fish and less saturated fat from butter, meat and other animal-based products. Cut back on baked goods, deep-fried foods and items made with heart-harming trans fat (listed as partially hydrogenated oil on ingredients lists).

**How much?** Aim to keep total fat intake between 20% and 35% of total calories, mostly from unsaturated fat. Try to consume less than 10% of calories from saturated fat. In a 2,000-calorie-a-day diet, that’s:

• 45-65 total grams of fat daily — mostly unsaturated.
• No more than 22 grams of saturated fat daily.
• As little trans fat as possible.

**Fat intake is related to heart health.** Replacing foods high in saturated and trans fats with less-saturated options can help lower cholesterol levels and reduce the risk of developing heart disease. Try these kitchen strategies:

• Cook and bake with vegetable oil (such as canola, olive, sunflower and peanut) instead of butter, cream, shortening or lard.
• Choose skim milk instead of whole milk or cream.
• Opt for legumes, fish, skinless poultry, nuts, seeds and lean meat instead of fattier cuts of meat.

**Roasted Tomato and Spinach Pasta**
2 cups (about 10 oz.) cherry tomatoes
1/2 cup vegetable oil, divided
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
3 cups fresh spinach or 1 package (10 oz.) frozen chopped spinach, thawed
8 oz. whole wheat spaghetti
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
5 tablespoons Parmesan cheese

Heat oven to 400°F. Rinse the tomatoes under running water. Cut in half. Spread on greased baking pan. Sprinkle oil (2 tablespoons), salt, pepper, and garlic powder on tomatoes. Stir to coat. Bake for 15-20 minutes. Prepare spinach and spaghetti as tomatoes bake. Rinse fresh spinach in water, slice in strips OR thaw, drain, and pat dry the frozen spinach. Set aside. Follow package directions to cook spaghetti. Drain. Add remaining 2 tablespoons oil, Italian seasoning, spinach, and baked tomatoes to spaghetti. Stir until heated through. Serve with Parmesans cheese.

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