

## Overcoming barriers to weight loss

Losing weight can be challenging and difficult. Barriers are things that get in the way of your plans to lose weight. Some examples include:

- Lack of time
- Eating when you are not hungry
- Lack of knowledge about healthy eating
- Holidays/Special events
- Lifestyle choices

Some barriers you can anticipate and plan for with some prepared strategies. Others you will discover as you try something new and then fail to achieve it. You will get better at finding ways to overcome barriers to weight loss with time and determination.

For each problem, you might think of several possible solutions. Try one and if it does not work, try something else. Some solutions may take some time to work out. Be creative and don't be afraid to try out ideas even if they seem a little crazy.

### Lack of time

There never feels like there are enough hours in the day. Time is a barrier that we all need to deal with so you're not alone. Consider a busy day at work so you quickly grab some food on the go or trying to find the time in the week to plan meals and get to the grocery store. Being busy can also get in the way of finding those extra 10-20 minutes in the day for exercise/physical activity.

It may be helpful to spend the weekend planning your healthy meals for the week and what you will need to buy from the grocery store. Take your own lunches to work with you to reduce the urge to grab a meal from a fast food chain. If you find it difficult in the morning to get meals made for the day, try preparing them the night before. We all run on different schedules so take some time now to think about your own routine and what has previously made an impact on your weight loss plans.

### Eating when you are not hungry

Many times we eat even though we are not hungry. This can be due to a number of reasons. We may eat because we are bored or lonely. We may eat to distract us from pain. We may use food to reward ourselves. Another major factor that can also influence weight loss plans and even increase knee osteoarthritis pain is stress. We all respond differently to stress and it can get in the way of us being physically active. Stress can be a trigger for many people to eat and drive us to choose foods that may not necessarily be good for us (for example, that block of chocolate!). Other people will end up eating less or may miss meals. If you are a person that uses food to help soothe difficult feelings routinely, you may need to explore options other than food such as listening to music, seeking a friend to socialize with, or even taking a walk around the block.

Reducing stress can give us a sense of control over our lives to find more time to do things that are good for us such as getting physically active. Planning your routine and becoming more conscious of your daily routine may help reduce your stress. Other strategies including relaxation training, mindfulness therapy or modifying your thought processes to stressful events can be helpful. Your local community may offer such courses or you may need referral to a health professional from your GP to pursue these options.

### Lifestyle – Eating habits

Many people have coupled certain events with their eating and drinking and developed some unhealthy habits. When this occurs, these events alone may begin to make you feel hungry. For example, if you routinely eat while watching the news or reading the paper, then every time you do these activities it is a trigger to eat.

To help break these eating habits, consider some of these strategies to separate these events so that you can identify and respond to actual hunger. Try to not do anything else while eating. If it feels uncomfortable at first this may be a good sign that you need to continue to practice this as you have developed the habit of eating with other activities. When you are distracted, you also pay less attention to how much you eat. Plan an eating schedule that fits in with your lifestyle and attempt to eat at one



place. For example, eating breakfast at 7:15am at the table (NO reading or news), 12:45pm at work in the kitchen or away from the desk for 15 minutes.

Try to keep a food diary as well to help you monitor what you are eating. Track everything and as soon as you eat it! Your food diary will not be as accurate if you forget to capture snacks you eat throughout the day. Sometimes we don't realise that all those extra foods we eat here and there all add up.

### Knowledge

Knowledge is power, but it can be difficult to make healthy choices if you've never been taught about healthy eating – what to eat and how much to eat. Grab something from your pantry and have a look at the food label. There's ingredients, health ratings, daily intake %'s and more. It can be a little overwhelming and make us choose foods that we are familiar/comfortable with at the shop based on our experiences. One strategy to incorporate healthier choices is to become a more informed consumer by learning how to make good food choices.

### Holidays/Special events

Holidays or special events are to be enjoyed. But they are also a prime time for us to give into our food desires and can be a trigger for most of us to over-indulge. The social aspect with lots of people around and all the variety of food choices can be a driver for people to over eat.

The key is to plan how you will deal with the event. For example, you might bring your own meal that you can enjoy or you may eat less at other meals to make up for it.

