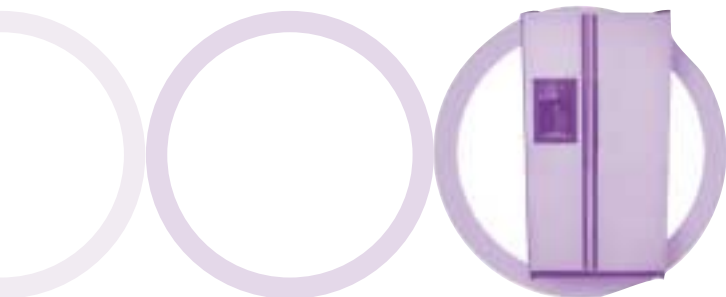


## Strategies to Improve Eating Habits

Helpful hints for improving your eating habits include:

- Clean out your cupboards at home. Donate foods that are not a part of your new healthy lifestyle to a food kitchen, food drive, or a needy family. Make a decision not to have those foods around the house.
- Avoid eating between meals. Eating between meals adds extra calories that you probably don't need and slows down the digestive process, which can lead to bloating or constipation.
- If you snack, choose low-calorie/high-fiber foods. Carrots, celery, and popcorn are inexpensive and filling snack alternatives.
- Slow down as you eat your meals. Eating slowly allows time for your stomach to tell your brain that you have had enough food. Typically, this helps you to eat less at mealtimes.
- Chew your food well. The better you chew your food, the less stress you put on the entire digestive system.
- Avoid fast foods. When you must eat at a fast food restaurant, choose a salad instead of a hamburger and avoid french fries.
- Plan and cook healthy meals with friends. You can all help each other choose the right foods and have fun preparing meals together.

If you are planning to make big changes in your eating habits, it's a good idea to talk with your doctor about them.



## Controlling Your Hunger

Some of the medicines you are taking to treat your mental illness may increase your appetite. There are things you can do to decrease your hunger and the desire to eat. This will help you avoid eating high-calorie, high-fat foods between meals. Here are some helpful hints on controlling hunger.

- ***Take a walk when you feel hungry.***

A person's body is not good at doing two things at once. When you exercise, the digestive system takes a break and allows the energy it would normally use to go to the muscles. As a result, you do not feel hungry after about 10 minutes of continuous exercise.

- ***Drink a glass of water or other sugar-free beverage.***

Liquids fill up the stomach and trick the stomach into feeling as if you have eaten. It is important to drink only water or sugar-free beverages so as to avoid extra, unneeded calories and sugar in your diet.

- ***Eat a rice cake or a half cup of raw vegetables.***

At times during the day when you tend to feel hungry, eat a high-fiber, low-calorie snack. You may also want to drink some water because it will make the fiber expand in your stomach. This snack is not likely to make you feel full, but it will curb your hunger enough to make it to mealtime.

- ***Chew sugar-free gum or suck on sugar-free mints.***

- ***Know the difference between "mouth hunger" and "stomach hunger."***

Stomach hunger is your body's way of telling you it needs food. Mouth hunger is the urge to use food to soothe feelings of boredom, nervousness, anger, sadness, or stress.

- ***DON'T take over-the-counter diet pills or appetite suppressants unless your doctor recommends them.***

In some cases, these products can interact with other medications, including antipsychotics, and have unwanted or dangerous side effects.

Are there any other ways you can control your hunger?

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