

**UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND GERIATRIC MEDICINE**

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UNIVERSITY of LOUISVILLE  
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## Paying Attention: What is My Body Telling Me?

**EAT WHEN PHYSICALLY HUNGRY.**  
**STOP EATING WHEN SATISFIED.**

### How do the above statements help me control weight?

Most of us never consider that our body tells us useful information all the time. We know when:

- To urinate, defecate.
- To sleep, to wake up.
- We become too hot or cold.
- We touch something too hot or cold.
- We feel a bug-bite that we can't even see!
- We are sick and something is wrong, etc.

### Most of us are not aware that we carry within us an INTERNAL CALORIE SENSOR!

If we pay attention, we can tell when we are physically hungry and when our physical hunger is satisfied. These feelings, if we obey them, keep us from putting food / calories in our mouths and allow us to know when we have eaten enough. That simple fact keeps extra calories out of our body, for those surplus calories cause unwanted weight gain—even if we eat healthy food!

### We are born with an INTERNAL CALORIE SENSOR that works instinctively.

At birth we cried when we were hungry and needed to eat. When we had enough to eat, we stopped eating by turning our head away from food, blowing bubbles, and holding our mouth tightly shut. We are not sure why some people stop paying attention to their hunger and food satisfaction. People who no longer listen to their internal signals of hunger and food satisfaction tend to have had some of these things happen when they were children:

- Taught to clean plate and/or punished if plate was not finished.
- Teased about eating too much or too little.
- Rewarded with dessert after finishing a plate of "good" food.
- Lived in a very tense, stressful situation where food was used as a comforting tool.
- Had to rush mealtimes.
- Often did not get enough to eat.
- Mealtimes were unpredictable.
- Were big boned and always told they weighed too much and had foods restricted by those in control so they would not gain weight.

### How can I relearn to pay attention to hunger and food satisfaction signals?

Most important, STOP and FEEL for what your body is telling you. Some early signs of physical hunger are:

- Your stomach area starts to hurt mildly and growls a little.
- Your energy level slips and mental concentration is not as good as usual.
- You become somewhat irritable and edgy about situations that usually do not bother you.

If you choose not to eat during these early signals, you may notice your hunger goes away. For some, not giving in to food at that initial hunger phase is a great feeling of mind over matter, until OVERHUNGRY FEELINGS START TO ARRIVE.

By the time that you start feeling overhungry, it has been 5-6 hours or more (depending upon what you ate or drank last) since your last food.

When you become overhungry, you may notice:

- Your mind becomes obsessed with finding something sweet or chewy. Or all of a sudden you notice that you start to eat or drink something you know you should NOT be eating!
- You begin feeling dizzy or lightheaded.
- You feel a headache or feel weak and shaky
- When you do eat, eating feels out of control and more like a binge.

**PA**



## Paying Attention: What is My Body Telling Me?

### How can I keep from overeating?

For the best results, in order to NOT overeat, do not wait until you are OVERHUNGRY because usually people overeat and eat foods that are not as healthy for them because they become desperate for any food – sensible eating no longer matters to the hungry brain!

The scale at the bottom of this page may help you know what to feel for as you relearn this important mind/body connection. You may find that when you are at the extremes of the scale you will not feel very well. Eating at regular intervals helps to keep our eating habits and life in balance. Keeping the hunger diary below will assist you with making adjustments to eating.

How to use the diary? Keep track of everything you eat for a few days. Along with recording your food intake, make yourself write down your hunger / fullness rating before you eat and after you eat. This will help you regain that INTERNAL CALORIE SENSOR.

| Date: | Hunger Diary  | Hunger Scale |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------|---------------|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|       |               | 0            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Time  | Food/Quantity |              |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|       |               |              |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|       |               |              |   |   |   |   |   |   |
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|       |               |              |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|       |               |              |   |   |   |   |   |   |

**Hunger Scale: 0 = Empty; 1 = Very Hungry; 2 = Strong Signal to Eat and Eating is Started; 3 = Comfortable and Content; 4 = Slightly Overate; 5 = Feel Full, Bloating and Uncomfortable; 6 = Absolutely, Positively, Lie-on-the-Floor Stuffed**