

Patient Information

Top Tips for Managing Hunger

Offering regular balanced meals and appropriate snacks in between are important to help your child manage their hunger. Meals based on the balanced plate will keep us feeling fullest for longest. It is also helpful to ensure your child is drinking enough, around 6 - 8 cups of fluid a day. If your child is not drinking enough they can confuse their thirst with hunger. See 'top tips for a balanced plate' and 'top tips for healthy snacks and drinks' sheets for more information.

Encourage your child to slow their eating. It takes at least 20 minutes before our brains register that we have eaten, so if they are eating quickly they may ask for an extra snack or a second helping before they have had chance to feel full.

Children eat for many reasons not always because they are hungry. They may eat because they are bored. If your child is genuinely hungry they will accept a healthier option such as a piece of fruit or yoghurt to fill themselves up. If this is refused it is unlikely they are asking for food because they are hungry so feel confident to say 'no' to high fat/sugar foods.

- To manage boredom use distraction to **'SURF THE URGE'**. If a child is asking for more food then distracting them for 20 minutes may well lessen their desire.



- Children may learn to eat to manage their emotions. Try to make time to talk to your child about anything that is worrying them. This will help them develop a great skill for life, managing their emotions in a healthy way, rather than using food for comfort or to suppress what they are feeling.
- To break habits set a new boundary, for example no eating in front of the TV. This needs to be done **CONSISTENTLY** otherwise it will reinforce that if they continue to pester they can get things back to the way they were. Stay strong!!