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**What can you do whilst you wait for your weight management appointment?**

Whilst you wait for your appointment, it may be helpful to start thinking about your current eating habits. Here are a few questions to think about…

**Are you eating regular meals every 4-6hours?**

**How big are your portion sizes?**

**Are you doing something else at the same time as eating?**

**Are you actually hungry or is it a craving?**

* Did you only start wanting the food because you’d seen it, smelled it, thought about it? In which case, it’s likely to be a craving.
* Is your ‘hunger’ for a very specific food? If the answer is a ‘yes’ then you are likely experiencing a craving.
* Cravings start to reduce after 20minutes. Is there something else you can do to distract yourself for 20 minutes? Some people have found having a bath, painting their nails, doing some gardening or cleaning, or doing something on the computer helpful.
* Some people confuse hunger with thirst or cravings – Try a glass of water first.
* It can also be helpful to not only think about *what* you are eating, but *why*. Some people find themselves eating when bored, tired or feeling down.

When eating, try focusing solely on the food. Try turning off the TV or putting down your favourite book or game.

You can also try thinking about:

* How does the food look, smell and taste?
* How does the texture of the food change as you continue chewing?
* Does your enjoyment of the food depend on your mood?

If you think your portion sizes are on the large side, could you try using smaller plates or bowls?

If you feel uncomfortably full after eating, try leaving a few mouthfuls at the end of your meal. This gets easier with practice.

If you find it difficult to leave food on the plate, consider cooking a bit less in the first place.

If not, consider making some gradual changes to improve the regularity of your meals.

It may be easier to start with something small such as a piece of fruit or pot of yoghurt and build on this as its get easier.

**How long does it take you to eat a meal?**

It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to register that your stomach is full. If you eat very quickly, then you can get through a lot of food in that time!

A few suggestions to help slow down your eating include:

* Try sitting at a table and use cutlery for your meals.
* Cut your food into smaller pieces.
* Try chewing each mouthful at least 20 times.
* Try putting cutlery down in between mouthfuls.

Some people find it helpful to track their intake using apps such as ‘My Fitness Pal’ or ‘Carbs & Cals’, online trackers such as ‘NHS Calorie Checker’, whilst others like to keep a record in a notebook.

**Are you fully aware of your current eating habits?**

Useful links

1. NHS Choices – Live Well [www.nhs.uk/livewell/pages/livewellhub](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/pages/livewellhub.aspx?_ga=2.223027419.1945126057.1541495265-173865840.1541495265)
2. Change for Life [www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/change-for-life](http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/change-for-life.aspx?_ga=2.227157469.1945126057.1541495265-173865840.1541495265)

Useful books

1. Ken Goss, 2011. Beating Overeating: Using compassion focussed therapy
2. Jan Chozen Bays, 2017. Mindful Eating: A guide to rediscovering a healthy and joyful relationship with food

Have you ever felt defined by your weight? Has dieting previously taken over your life? Do you ever feel you are waiting to do things until you have lost weight? It might be a good first step to have a think about what other things really matter to you in your life, be that family, friends, fun and adventure, spirituality, learning etc. How do you want to be living your life? What steps do you need to take to begin living your life the way you want right now? Rather than waiting until you lose weight.

For example, are your family/friends important to you? What small thing could you do today that means you are living your life in line with what’s important to you? Maybe you could call up an old friend for a chat or arrange to do something enjoyable with your family.

Living life in line with what is important to you can have a positive impact upon general mental wellbeing and long-term weight management.

**What matters to you?**

We understand that a range of difficulties such as anxiety and low mood, loss and having experienced difficult or traumatic events in your life, might make it difficult to maintain a helpful relationship with food and therefore reach your weight loss goals. If you notice that you may be experiencing any mental health difficulties then we would encourage you to gain some psychological support whilst you are waiting to be seen by the weight management team. You can self-refer by calling:

* Vitaminds Bristol **0333 200 1893**
* Positive Steps for North Somerset **0300 300 0834**
* South Gloucestershire talking therapies **0117 378 4270**
* Wiltshire IAPT **01380 731335**

They will then arrange an assessment to see if you would benefit from some psychological support.

Below are some smart phone apps that you may wish to try in the meantime that can help with anxiety and low mood.

* **Wellmind**
* **Headspace**
* **Oxford MBCT**
* **Calm**
* **Inner Hour**

**Further support**

**5 ways to wellbeing**

Having positive general wellbeing means you are better equipped to deal with stress, and therefore likely to be more productive, feel more confident, as well as feel happier. All of these things are important in helping you to stay motivated so you can reach your weight management goals, and cope with any setbacks without losing focus.

**Evidence suggests there are 5 steps we can all take to improve our mental wellbeing.** If you give them a try, you may feel happier, more positive and able to get the most from life. This in turn might help you to feel more able to make some positive changes that relate to your lifestyle and weight.

* **Connect** – connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships.
* **Be active** – you don't have to go to the gym. Any increase in activity however small can make a difference. Find an activity that you really enjoy that fits in with your life or if possible, take the stairs instead of the lift.
* **Keep learning** – learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not sign up for a course, start learning to play a musical instrument or get crafty.
* **Give to others** – even the smallest act can count whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks.
* **Be mindful** – be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

**Self-soothing – take some time out just for you**

We have found that learning to self soothe can be helpful for achieving weight loss goals. This can be as simple as making some time for yourself where you do something relaxing or enjoyable. Putting your own needs above or on the same level as others doesn’t mean you are selfish. If we focus on other people’s needs and ignore our own, this can lead to increased stress and unhappiness. This can then in turn make it more difficult for us to make lasting changes to our health and lifestyle and can make us turn to food to feel better.