

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

### Why might I want to change the way I eat and exercise? →

Eating healthier is not about losing weight. It can help you feel better mentally and physically, and feel like you are able to do more things.

Some people can find it hard to stick to a healthy lifestyle, especially in college. It can help you to keep remembering why you want to be healthier. You could draw a picture or write a list and use this to motivate you to keep going.

People eat for lots of different reasons, not just because they are hungry. Reasons can include feeling bored, covering up feelings, feeling low or because it has become a habit.

Write a list of why or when you eat to help you understand why you are eating. Steps towards a healthier lifestyle

Managing your eating habits successfully means making changes to your lifestyle that you feel you can maintain. Fad diets and herbal teas/supplements will not have long term results.

### Here are some steps you can take towards having a healthier lifestyle:

- Plan your meals and when you will exercise. Be realistic with your goals and use a food and activity diary to track progress.
- When planning, think about the barriers and problems you've faced before – and what can be done to overcome them this time.
- Identify personal triggers for eating (e.g. boredom eating, drinking, feeling low) and plan around these.
- Always bring healthy snacks on the go to avoid relying on buying things from a shop.
- Eat regularly to avoid skipping meals.
- Breakfast is extremely important to set you up for a good day (think porridge, wholegrain toast or a smoothie as good choices).
- Heavy drinking can result in binge eating takeaways after a night out, or eating unhealthily the next day when you are hung-over.
- Be mindful of mixing your drinks with sugary fizzy drinks – try sugar-free versions or soda water.
- Set realistic goals for exercising. A 20 minute fast paced walk three times a week could be a good starting point. You could then aim for 30 minutes 5 days a week. You could also plan to go to a class in the gym once a week.

- Involve your family and friends – if they are aware you are trying to become healthier they can help by; not bringing sugary or fatty foods into the house, cooking healthier with you or by joining you in exercise.
- Being healthy does not mean restricting yourself. Eating a little of what you like is ok, just ensure it is not regularly.

### **Coping with Food Cravings**

Food cravings are often hard to resist and can lead to fast weight gain. By following a healthy meal plan you can beat these cravings. Aim to have planned regular healthy meals throughout the day. This will help keep you satisfied and prevent you getting hungry, making it easier to resist cravings.

**Do not skip meals:** When you skip a meal, you may snack on sugary or fatty foods. Following a healthy meal plan will keep you full and prevent you from needlessly snacking.

**Eat Breakfast:** Eat foods which are high in fibre and low in sugar (e.g. porridge, Branflakes, slices of wholegrain toast and a banana.) Include foods that have a low glycaemic index with each meal. These foods keep you feeling fuller for longer.

**Examples of low glycaemic index foods are:** multigrain bread, brown pasta or brown rice, apples, oranges, bananas, pears, cabbage, broccoli, peas and beans.

**Distract yourself** from giving into cravings: drink water or a sugar free drink.

**Delay your urges** to give into cravings by; talking to someone watching TV, reading a book, going for a short walk– the craving to eat will pass.

**Understand your cravings:** Cravings lessen and eventually disappear as time goes on. Be aware of what triggers your cravings and have healthy snacks on hand if you feel you need to eat.

Please see the [HSE Healthy Eating](#) website for further information and supports.