

# regular eating and water

Establishing regular eating habits will form a fundamental part of overcoming your eating disorder. Regular eating is the foundation upon which other positive changes in your eating habits will be based. Regular eating involves eating something roughly every three hours. Regular eating usually takes the form of three meals and 2 or 3 snacks a day. This is usually:

- Breakfast
- A snack for morning tea
- Lunch
- A snack in the afternoon
- Dinner
- A snack after dinner if required

## Why Eat Regularly?

Establishing regular eating will help you to overcome your eating disorder. Regular eating:

- Gives structure to your eating habits, so that eating can start to become a regular part of your life.
- Leads to the consumption of meals and snacks. Once the routine of eating meals and snacks is in place, you can modify the food content and portion size.
- Helps to combat delayed or infrequent eating.
- Helps to combat unstructured eating, such as grazing.
- Establishes habits that will help to prevent binge eating. When you are eating regularly, you avoid the extreme hunger that can lead to binge eating.
- Keeps your blood sugar level steady and minimises feelings of tiredness, dizziness and irritability.
- Keeps your metabolism steady. If you leave more than 4-5 hours between eating (during the day), your body goes into "Starvation Mode", preparing for a further lack of food. It lowers its metabolic rate in order to preserve energy. Therefore, when you do eat next, the food you consume will be metabolised differently, for the purpose of storage – this is exactly what you are trying to avoid!

## Water Consumption



Water is essential to the human body. It is used to absorb nutrients from food, to transport nutrients around the body to where they are needed, to remove waste products, and to lower body temperature in warm weather. The human body uses approximately 4% of its body weight in water each day, and **health professionals recommend Australian adults drink between 1.5-2L water daily**. Failing to drink enough water can lead to **dehydration**, with dangerous consequences such as:

- Impaired physical performance
- Salivary gland function - water is used to produce saliva and is essential for oral health
- Heat exhaustion, heat stroke, or loss of consciousness in hot temperatures, when the Body is placed under extra stress
- Impaired mental performance, including functions such as memory
- Increased risk of urinary tract cancers and colon cancer
- Kidney malfunction - if it does not receive enough water, salts become concentrated and this increases risk of kidney stones.

## Tips for Regular Eating

When establishing your own system of regular eating, try to follow these guidelines:



- Plan your eating and know when your next meal or snack will be.
- Your eating pattern should be an important part of your day. It may have to take precedence over other activities.
- Do not skip a meal or snack.
- Do not leave a gap of more than 4 hours between meals/snacks.
- Do not eat between your meals and snacks. Do your best to delay giving in to the urge to eat in the gaps. Remember that such urges pass with time, and if you are conscious of such urges you can overcome them. If you consistently experience hunger between meals and snacks you may want to reconsider how you schedule your eating – everybody is different. Maybe 3-4 hours is just too long for your body to go without food!
- You may choose what you eat, but you must not purge (i.e., vomit or use laxatives).
- Consider carrying a snack with you in the car or your handbag, in case you get caught out of the house/office at mealtimes. (This could be: a piece of fruit; a muesli bar; a small bag of dried fruit and/or nuts.)
- You may feel fear of gaining weight with regular eating. If this is so, raise this issue with your therapist. People in the healthy weight range do not usually gain weight when they eat regularly. People who are underweight will need to regain some weight, and will probably do so with regular eating. People who are overweight benefit from regular eating in that they tend to binge less and therefore lose weight.



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