



Bariatric Surgery: Hunger and Fullness

Many of our patients have difficulty recognizing hunger and fullness after they've had bariatric surgery. Here are some tips and strategies for identifying these feelings...

Hunger: the *physical* need to eat.

Appetite: the *desire* or pure want to eat.

Learning the difference between these two feelings take practice, along with trial and error.

- **Hunger** usually appears several hours after eating (i.e. 2.5 to 3 hours after your last meal or snack)
 - An individual may note a growling stomach, may feel light-headed, have a headache or feel weak.
- **Appetite** usually appears out of nowhere, and can last for several minutes to several hours.
 - Emotions and boredom can often trigger your appetite.
 - It can continue to occur even after you've had something to eat, usually until you have the *specific* food that you're craving.

Fullness is often hard to recognize right after surgery, it takes practice to learn what the right amount of food or liquid is for you after surgery. Your goal is to feel satisfied, not overly full or stuffed. Most people should only be able to comfortably eat 1 cup of food at meals and snacks post-surgery.

- The best way to know if you're full is to wait and see when you start feeling hungry again after a meal or snack.
 - Hunger within 2-3 hours after eating = you probably ate enough
 - Hunger within 1-2 hours after eating = you can probably eat a little more next time

This scale can help you with knowing when to start and stop eating. Avoid the dark zones (1, 2, 8, 9, and 10). The best spot to be at throughout the day is **4-6**.

The Hunger Scale

