



How Can I Identify Eating Triggers?

If our only trigger to eat were physical hunger, our rate of overweight and obesity in the US would be much lower. Do you ever eat for reasons other than true hunger? To minimize eating cues other than hunger, it is important to identify and understand these cues. Situations and emotions that trigger us to eat fall into five main categories:

- **Social:** Eating when around other people. For example, excessive eating can result from being encouraged by others to eat; eating to fit in; arguing, or feelings of inadequacy around people.
- **Emotional:** Eating in response to boredom, stress, fatigue, tension, depression, anger, anxiety or loneliness as a way to "fill the void."
- **Situational:** Eating because the opportunity is there. For example, at a restaurant, seeing an advertisement for a particular food, passing by a bakery. Eating may also be associated with certain activities such as watching TV, going to the movies or a sporting event, etc.
- **Thoughts:** eating as a result of negative self-worth or making excuses for eating. For example, scolding oneself for looks or a lack of will power.
- **Physiological:** Eating in response to physical cues. For example, increased hunger due to skipping meals or eating to cure headaches or other pain.

To identify what triggers 'hungerless' eating in you, keep a food diary that records what and when you eat as well as what stressors, thoughts, or emotions you identify as you eat. You should begin to identify patterns to your 'hungerless' eating fairly quickly.

For more information on how to identify eating triggers, contact your local base **Health and Wellness Center** or **Dietitian**.

Shape Your Future... Your Weigh!™