

what is normal eating?

Regular Eating

Regular eating is critical to recovery from eating disorders. Regular eating generally involves:

- ◇ Breakfast
- ◇ A morning snack
- ◇ Lunch
- ◇ An afternoon snack
- ◇ Dinner
- ◇ An evening snack (if you had an early dinner)



Regular eating helps to combat many of the behaviours which maintain eating disorders, such as binge eating, grazing, hunger, or severe food restriction. It may be helpful to think of foods that you eat as part of your daily meals and snacks as 'everyday foods.' These include foods with the nutrients we need in our daily diet (protein, carbohydrates, fats, fruit and vegetables). You can think of 'energy dense' foods as 'occasional foods' rather than 'bad foods' - you can eat these regularly as part of your healthy eating plan, but just not as often, for example having an ice-cream instead of a snack.



Along with regular eating, a healthy lifestyle also involves 'normal eating.' Sometimes when you have been restricting your food intake for a long time, you forget what 'normal eating' is like.

Here are some descriptions of normal eating, taken from the book *The Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family* by Ellyn Satter (1999, Kelcy Press).

Normal Eating is...

Normal eating is being able to eat when you're hungry and continue eating until you are satisfied. It is being able to choose food you like, and eat it and truly get enough of it, and not just stop eating because you think you should.

Normal eating is being able to use some moderate constraint in your food selection to get the right foods, but not being so restrictive that you miss out on pleasurable foods.



Normal eating is giving yourself permission to eat something because you're happy, sad or bored, or just because it feels good.

Normal eating is three meals a day, or can be choosing to munch along. It's leaving some cookies on the plate because you know you can have some again tomorrow, or it's eating more now because they taste so wonderful when they're fresh.

Normal eating is overeating at times, feeling stuffed and uncomfortable. It is also undereating at times, and wishing you had more.

Normal eating is trusting your body to make up for your lapses in eating.

Normal eating takes up some of your time and attention, but it keeps its place as only one important area of your life.

In short, normal eating is flexible. It varies in response to your emotions, your schedule, your hunger, and your proximity to food.

