

breaking the vicious cycle

Disordered eating works in a vicious cycle - many of the associated behaviours reinforce or strengthen the beliefs which drive the disorder. What may have begun as apparently minor steps to feel more in control of your weight and shape has now become a pattern which is causing problems in your life. To take the control back from the eating disorder, here are some tips for breaking the vicious cycle.

Regular Eating

This is the most important thing you can do to break the cycle.

Regular eating:

- Keeps your blood sugar levels up and raises your body's metabolism
- Provides energy throughout the day
- Reduces the risk of extreme hunger & drive to eat high calorie food




Plan and eat 3 moderate sized meals and 2 or 3 small snacks per day (Breakfast, morning snack, lunch, afternoon snack, dinner & maybe evening snack). And remember:


- Do not go for more than 3-4 waking hours without eating anything
- Do not miss meals or snacks – if not hungry at the time, eat something small
- Do not eat between your planned meals and snacks - no 'grazing'

Write down some meal/snack ideas below so you know what would be healthy to eat in advance (such as fruit, yoghurt, nuts, muesli bars). Try to have these available when you need them (e.g. keep snacks in your handbag or car or at work) and shop when you are NOT hungry to ensure healthy choices.

Other Tips

- Drink 6-8 glasses of water per day (not including tea/coffee) 
- Try not to eat too quickly – sit down and enjoy your planned meals
- Eat a balanced diet:
 - ◇ plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables
 - ◇ protein (meat, fish, cheese, eggs, soy/tofu)
 - ◇ moderate amounts of carbohydrate (wholegrain cereals & breads, rice, pasta, potatoes)
 - ◇ some oils/fats (salad dressing, avocado)
- Aim to do approximately 30 minute of moderate exercise per day – taking the dog for a walk and going for a swim are good examples. Other ways of keeping fit without too much effort include: walking to the shops instead of driving, or getting off the bus one stop early. Exercise should not be compulsive, it should be enjoyable and just enough to keep you healthy and fit.

(Note: if you are underweight, or overweight, or purging regularly or suffer from dizziness, you should not engage in any exercise without first consulting your General Practitioner.)

- Use a food diary – this takes practice and discipline but really helps you to work out what is working and if something is going wrong
- Plan to sit down with your food diaries once a week – chose a time where you can spare 30-60 minutes each week to look for patterns in your eating e.g. have you been missing a snack or grazing on food between meals? Did you binge and if so, what triggered it? Once you've worked out where the problems are, you can plan to make changes 
- See our others handouts on regular eating, self-monitoring and food logs, meal planning, and more