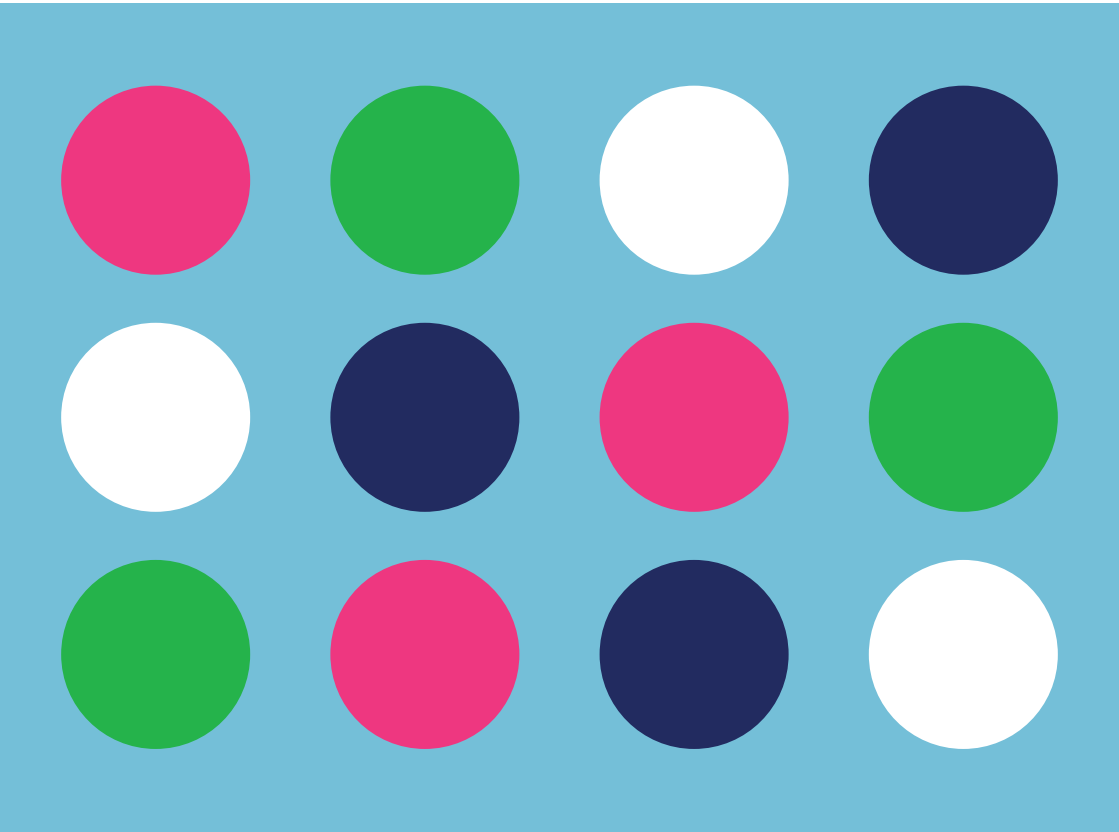


Changing Patterns

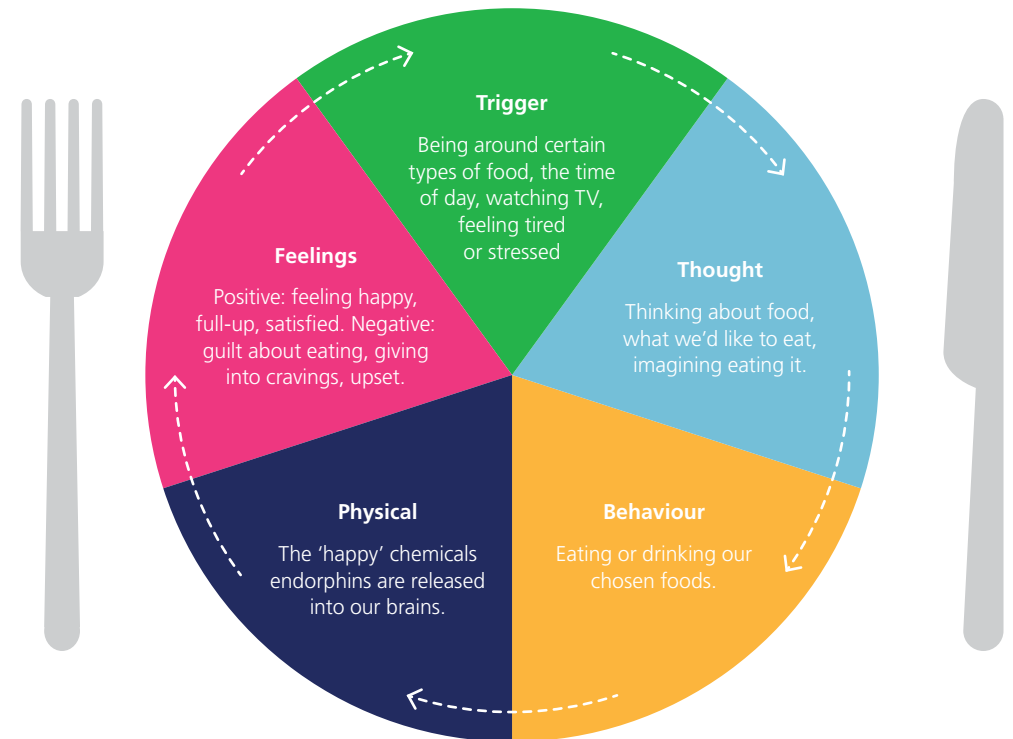


How do our eating habits develop?

When we eat food that tastes good and gives us pleasure, endorphins (we like to think of them as happy chemicals) fill our brains, which give us that feeling of satisfaction that comes from eating.

These memories and associations begin to happen when we are babies and build up over time, influenced by how and who we grow up with and the choices available to us about what we eat and drink.

Certain foods and eating can become triggers for these happy and satisfied feelings, so that as we store memories, we develop associations and habits which can bring us back to wanting these foods again and again.



There are so many little things that influence the way we eat that often we don't even think about the factors that are part of our experience, such as smell, taste and texture.

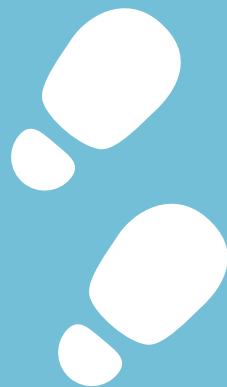
It could even be factors such as the shiny wrapping of a chocolate bar, our mood at the time or who we're with that can make us tempted by certain foods.

All of the things that we've talked about so far can lead to us building up eating patterns. The more we eat these foods the stronger the pattern becomes and we can end up feeling like we have little control over our own choices.

Out with the old, in with the new

Understanding how our relationships with food have developed can help us to break our past chains and develop new patterns that will keep us happy and healthy.

You've probably heard this before but small steps really do make a big difference and we've included some of our top tips here to get you on the right track and keep you motivated!



Shopping

Buying the right kind of foods to start off with is a great place to start thinking about introducing new patterns.

Snack time

Investing in some healthy snacks while you're out shopping should help you to avoid the temptation of unhealthy treats that you might be tempted by if you don't have a better option to hand.

Make a list

This will help you to plan in advance which foods you'd like to have and will help you to avoid temptation and impulse buys.

Keep it small

Big value packs can be tempting but lots of research has shown that although they can sometimes be cheaper, the large options make us more likely to eat more as there is more food available.

No empty stomachs

Eating a meal before shopping will make sure you're satisfied and less likely to be tempted by unhealthy snacks and foods.

Make your own

Making your own lunch will help you to know all of the ingredients that have gone into it and you'll have more control over what you're really eating than shop bought or canteen options.

Talking Triggers

Triggers are all around and the more we can do to remove them the better for you and your health. As you move through your weight loss journey you will probably come up with your own ways of dealing with triggers but hopefully these ideas should come in handy.

Out of sight...

Seeing food can trigger memories, which can lead to cravings. Remember, keep it out of sight to keep it out of mind!

Make some eating zones

If you can eat at a table instead of eating in front of the TV this can make a big difference to improving your eating patterns. It will also help to minimise the risk of the TV becoming a trigger for eating certain types of foods.

Take a break

We know it isn't always easy but eating your lunch away from your desk or immediate workplace will help you to focus on eating your food and will help to stop your workspace acting as a food trigger which could lead you to eat more food.

Keep a diary

Making a note of everything you eat can help you to become more aware of what makes up your daily eating patterns and the little things that you might forget about if you don't write them down. If there are any negative patterns that you notice you can then work out a plan to begin to make some changes to your habits.

Mind Matters

Your thoughts play an important role in what you choose to eat and what might trigger you to crave certain types of food at different times. If you do feel a craving coming on try and counteract it by keeping your mind active by doing something else instead to take your thoughts away from food.

Sometimes our brains can also misunderstand sensations in the body, so when you think you're hungry your body might actually be craving something to drink so try quenching your thirst first.



Educated Eating

We want you to really savour and enjoy the food that you eat and one of the best ways to achieve this is by putting a routine in place so that you're always satisfied.

Start right

Spacing out your eating and including something to eat in the morning can help to stabilise blood sugar, and improve your energy levels over the day. Eating breakfast can also help you to keep your appetite in check over the rest of the day and has been shown to be an important factor in successful long term weight loss.

Take 10

Walking for ten minutes before you eat can help you to feel more energised after your meal and reduce the temptation to snack soon after you've finished eating.

Small plates

Using a small plate for your food is a great way to trick your mind into thinking a portion is larger than it actually is. Give it a go and see if it works for you.

Slow down

Putting down your knife and fork between mouthfuls gives your body more time to digest your food and can help you to feel fuller quicker which will all help you to reach your weight loss goal.

Last, but not least, enjoy!

Take the time to enjoy and notice what you are eating instead of eating on the go, or doing other things at the same time such as working or watching TV. This will also help you to feel full and happy at the end of each meal.