

Mental health and wellbeing

Nutrition Support Action Plan (NSAP) for case managers/key workers - increased appetite and/or overeating

What can cause someone to overeat?

- Stress and/or anxiety
- Boredom
- Habitual overeating
- Not listening to body cues when full or reduced satiety cues
- Eating for comfort
- Quitting smoking
- Sleep deprivation
- Medication side-effects
- Feeling better and in control after stabilisation due to a new medication/ disappearance of negative symptomatology
- Restrictive diets

Why is over-eating a problem?

- Prolonged over-eating can lead to weight gain, which can increase the risk of some health conditions (including diabetes and heart disease).
- It may worsen pre-existing medical conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, reflux or hypertension.

- It may create a financial burden for consumers if they end up spending too much money on food.
- It may result in low mood and depression from perceived weakness and lack of control with food or from poor body image.

Actions for case manager/key worker

- Encourage consumers to eat five to six small meals each day in a quiet environment. If eating this regularly leads to overeating, limit to three regular-sized meals per day.
- Encourage consumers to try eating slowly and chew foods well.
- Encourage consumers to try drinking water before and with meals.
- Trial introducing at least one low glycaemic index (GI) food per day. Low GI foods keep you feeling “fuller for longer”. Examples of lower GI foods include dairy products, pasta, basmati rice, wholegrain bread, porridge, sweet potato, sweet corn, all legumes (e.g. baked beans, kidney beans, chickpeas) and most fruits.

- Encourage some foods to be put away out of sight, if necessary, or try not to keep tempting foods such as chocolates or chips in the cupboard or fridge. It's easier saying 'no' once in the shops than 100 times at the cupboard.
- For some people, leaving healthy snack foods (such as fresh fruit) on the table may be enough to satisfy their needs. Healthy snacks for the fridge can include carrot, celery or cucumber sticks, cherry tomatoes or raw green beans. Fruit, rice crackers, raw or unsalted nuts, bread and toast are healthier snacks than chips, biscuits and chocolate.
- Encourage trying to satisfy sweet cravings with foods that have some nutritional value such as low-fat milkshakes, low-fat yoghurt or low-fat ice cream. Remember to limit/monitor portion sizes.
- Modifications to diet habits are generally more successful when combined with lifestyle changes. Consider whether other activities (such as walks or increasing time spent with social groups) may help. This can assist with stress relief and maintaining or achieving a healthy weight.
- Additional resources can be located on the Weight Control NEMO page,

including 'Plating it up,' 'The hunger level scale,' 'Importance of sleep for a healthy lifestyle,' and, 'Understanding portion sizes.'

- A psychologist or occupational therapist referral may also be useful to identify non-food related coping strategies, depending on your consumer's needs
- For medication side effects causing overeating, consider discussing with the treating doctor.

For restrictive diets:

- Encourage consumers to increase variety in their diet using all five food groups (grain foods, protein, fruits, vegetables, and dairy and/or alternatives).
- Consider discussing with the treating doctor, psychologist, or referring to a dietitian for further strategies.

Do you need more information? Would you like to refer your consumer for more individualised advice?

Find an Accredited Practising Dietitian on the Dietitians Association of Australia's website www.daa.asn.au (click on 'Find an APD').