



Hunger vs. Appetite

When we eat, it is either due to us needing food or wanting food.

Hunger is our physical *need to eat*. This is when our blood sugar levels are low and as a result our stomachs rumble, we get fatigued, and can suffer mood swings. Hunger occurs once you haven't eaten in a while and if food is eaten properly should only occur a few times throughout the day.

On the other hand, our appetite is our *desire to eat*. This is determined by cravings, boredom, or emotions rather than actual hunger and can occur at any time of day. Our appetite is usually what gets us in trouble when we are trying to eat healthy because it determines our preference for what kind of food we want to eat.

Sometimes it is hard to determine whether you are actually hungry for food or if you just have an appetite for food. The problem is that our appetite can make us want to eat food even when we aren't really hungry. Have you ever been really full from dinner but still ate that piece of chocolate cake for dessert because it still sounded delicious? That's your appetite speaking (and sometimes it becomes louder than your hunger). Our appetite can be hard to ignore, especially when you get into the routine of listening to your appetite rather than hunger and it becomes normal.

So how can we change this?

The best way to decide if you should eat is to simply listen to your body. Are you exhibiting symptoms of needing food or exhibiting symptoms of wanting food?

This is a battle between your stomach and your brain. Each may be telling you different things, but you should take a step back and listen to what your stomach is saying because that is where hunger originates from. If you are actually hungry, then you can think of healthy food that you can eat to fill you up. If you aren't actually hungry and are rather simply craving food, you can recognize this and remind yourself that you don't need to eat.

Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between your hunger and appetite. The key is to take a second to listen to what your body needs rather than what your brain may want. By identifying the differences you can become mentally stronger and take more control over your diet. You can eliminate those unhealthy foods that you desire and instead eat those healthy foods that are essential.

By distinguishing your hunger and appetite, you are making a better choice to live a healthier lifestyle.



SOfit

Special Olympics Minnesota | 100 Washington Avenue South, Suite 550, Minneapolis, MN 55401

so.fit@somn.org | T 800.783.7732 | F 612.333.8782 | somn.org