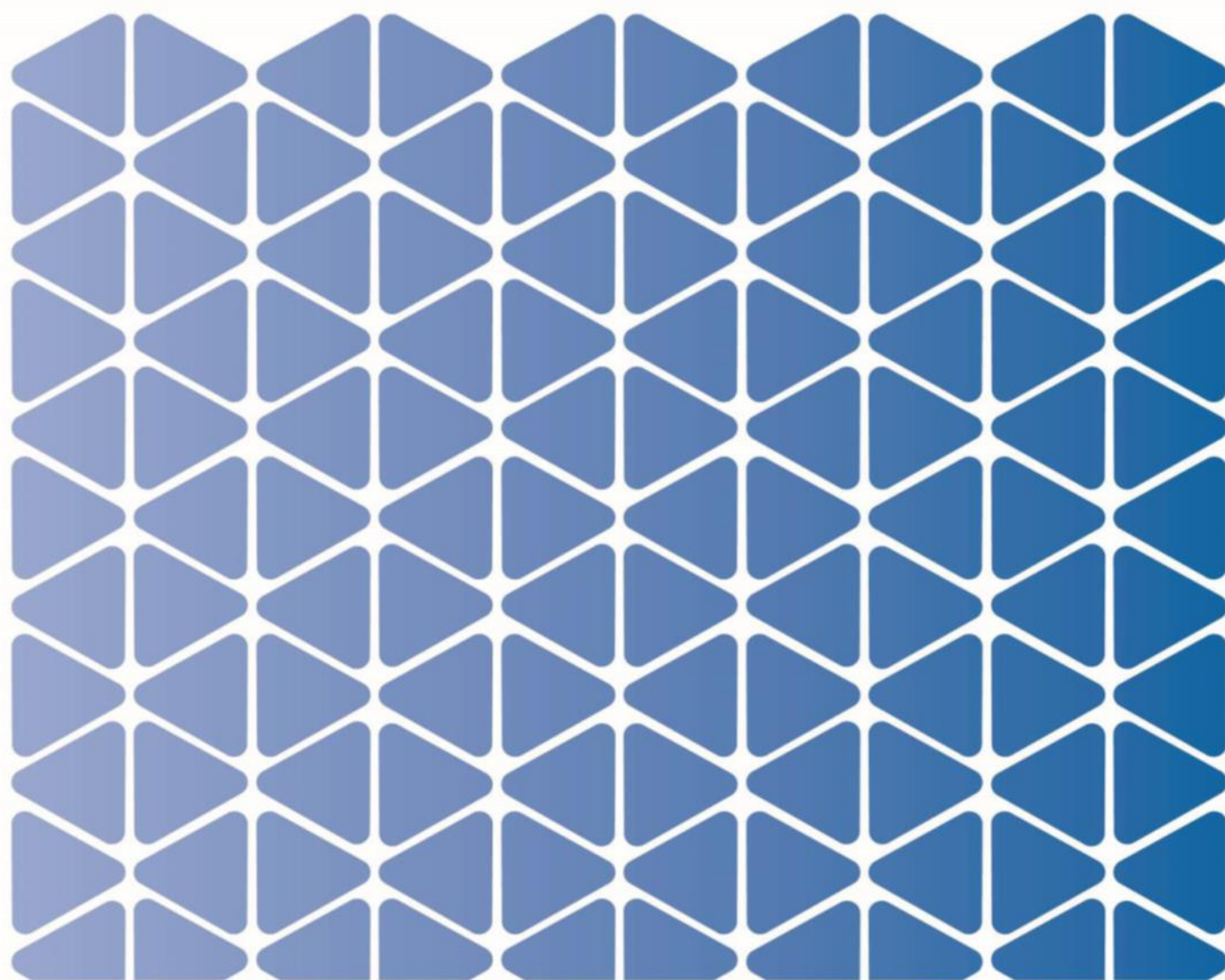


## PATIENT INFORMATION

# EMOTIONAL EATING



## **This leaflet has been developed for patients in the Specialist Weight Management Service.**

We all eat on occasions when we are not hungry, however this can have an impact on our health and weight if it becomes a frequent habit.

Our emotions can drive our eating: often fuelled by the belief that eating will help change/improve how we are feeling. There are various terms to describe this type of eating, stress eating, comfort eating, boredom eating.

Learning to recognise triggers for emotional eating.

### ***Are you an emotional eater?***

- Do you eat when stressed, bored, angry?
- Do you reward yourself with food?
- Do you associate certain events/ activities with food/drink, like a glass of wine and/or a takeaway after a stressful day?
- Does food feel like your friend at times?

If you answered yes to any of these then it is likely that you are an emotional eater. Taking time to recognise true hunger (when our body is physically hungry) and emotional hunger (when we have an appetite or desire for something to eat) can be a helpful tool in managing food intake.

Before reaching out for something to eat, take a few minutes to think about whether you are physically hungry or responding to your emotions.

Physical hunger is likely to :-	Emotional hunger is likely to:-
happen a few hours after last meal	have no physical cues
come on gradually	happen quickly
give physical cues - stomach growling	crave specific foods
if your energy levels may be low	not be satisfied after eating
be satisfied when you eat something	feel guilty/shame after eating

## ***Are you emotionally hungry?***

- Take a moment to think about what is going on – are you bored, stressed, distressed etc. Emotional eating is not always linked to unpleasant emotions so take a moment to identify the emotion.
- What is going to be the most helpful thing for you right now
  - **Do you need a distraction?** - connect with someone, read a book, play a game, find something else to do with your hands, go for a walk/exercise
  - **Do you need something to relax/calm/comfort you?** - have a warm bath, call a friend, put headphones on and listen to calming music, do a mindfulness meditation
- If you must eat something, take time to eat it mindfully (see mindful eating resource)
  - Rate your hunger – how hungry or thirsty are you on a scale of. 1-10?
  - Remove distractions and turn your attention to what you are eating and your body.
  - Have a small portion and take small bites – eat slowly and chew well.
  - Savour your food and stop when you have had enough.
  - If you choose to eat **remember to mind the GAP.**

**Game-Changer!** Recognize that this moment could change everything. You have the opportunity to choose your next move right NOW!

**Ask** yourself: Am I satisfied? Am I no longer hungry? Why am I eating?

**Power!** You have the power to make a choice. Continue to eat or stop right here. If you are hungry, that is find, eat! If not, investigate what feeling or situation is prompting you to eat.

## **Useful links**

<https://www.mindful.org/the-body-scan-practice/>

<https://eatingmindfully.com/blog/>

<https://www.mindful.org/6-ways-practice-mindful-eating/>

<https://amihungry.com/how-can-mindful-eating-help-me>

**If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.**

### **Patient Experience**

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

### **Feedback**

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

### **How to contact PALS:**

**Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: [wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net)**

### **Opening times:**

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.