

Healthy Vs Unhealthy Eating and Exercise Behaviours

Below is a detailed list of healthy and unhealthy eating and exercise behaviours which may support in the identification of disordered eating or exercise.

Eating Behaviours

It is healthy to:

- Eat a variety of foods across all food groups (grains, cereals, dairy, meat product, fruit and vegetables)
- Eat a variety of foods across all macronutrients (protein, carbohydrates and fat)
- Have a fluctuating appetite
- Enjoy all food
- Enjoy and eat food in social situations
- Identify signals of fullness and hunger
- Enjoy 1- 2 standard drinks of alcohol
- Eat mindfully
- Eat adequate amounts for biological existence
- Be relaxed about eating
- Be flexible about eating
- Eat to support physical, mental, social and emotional well-being and development
- Eat regularly i.e. every 3- 4 hours
- Eat regular snacks
- Cope with various emotional states without attachment to excessive dieting and exercise
- Eat culturally appropriate foods for particular occasions
- Drink water appropriately – not too much and not too little

It is unhealthy to:

- x Cut out food groups or particular foods without medical diagnosis
- x Follow someone else's diet to suit you
- x Constant dieting or switching from one diet to another
- x Have a fear of certain foods
- x Be anxious about eating
- x Fear attending social events because of eating
- x Avoid eating socially
- x Use supplements instead of eating whole foods
- x Measuring, counting or weighing food and counting calories or counting macronutrients
- x Follow rigid eating rules
- x Label yourself as 'bad' or a 'failure' if you break diet rules
- x Label food with an emotional attachment or judgment
- x Have an over reliance on quick-fix strategies
- x Use compensatory behaviours such as vomiting, laxatives, diuretics, extreme fasting
- x Use food as a reward
- x Feed others but not eat yourself
- x Excessively deny yourself of desired foods
- x Engage in excessive restricted eating
- x Restrict fluids or excessive drinking
- x Use water to suppress appetite
- x Use distracting behaviours to ignore hunger cues e.g. smoking/exercise
- x Use illegal or banned substances to control body composition
- x Not eat food prepared by others
- x Eat in secret
- x Fear feeling full
- x Use competitive sport as an excuse for extreme diet behaviours

Exercise Behaviours

It is healthy to:

- Rest
- Move in a variety of ways
- Exercise at a variety of intensities
- Exercise to support mental, emotional, physical and social well-being
- Exercise within recommended physical activity guidelines
- Exercise for performance
- Exercise for enjoyment
- Exercise with supported nutrition to promote adequate recovery
- Take exercise free days
- Take breaks from a set exercise regimen such as whilst on holiday or if injured or sick

It is unhealthy to:

- x Exercise while sick or injured
- x Exercise as a means of punishment or control
- x Exercise purely for burning calories instead of for fun and enjoyment
- x Not allow time to recover sufficiently causing poor performance, frequent illness, disturbed sleep and alterations in mood.
- x Engage in guilt-driven exercise without enjoyment
- x Exercise through pain
- x Label yourself as a failure if you break an exercise regime
- x Use exercise as a reason to eat
- x Engage in extended bouts of exercise of any kind (> 60 mins) multiple times a day
- x Have an addiction or compulsion to exercise, including in private or at unconventional times during the day (e.g. very early in the morning or very late at night)
- x Experience anxiety related to inability to exercise
- x Feel the compulsion to exercise more
- x Have menstrual dysfunction or low testosterone levels due to excessive exercise and diet habits
- x Have a compulsion to perform one particular exercise only
- x Engage in deliberate behaviour to maximise energy expenditure
- x Believe that exercise takes precedent over other life activities
- x Use competitive sport as an excuse for extreme exercise regimes