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 and reduced satiation cues
- Eating for comfort
- Quitting smoking
- Medication side-effects
- Feeling better and in control after stabilisation on medication/disappearance of negative symptomatology.

Why is over-eating a problem?
- Prolonged overeating can lead to health problems, such as overweight and obesity, as well as increased risk of diabetes and heart disease.
- It may worsen any 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 on food.
- It may result in a low mood and depression, resulting from perceived weakness and lack of control over food and eating habits or from poor body image.

Actions for case manager/key worker
Some things you can recommend to your consumers:
- Eat five to six small meals each day. If this leads to overeating, limit to three meals a day.
- Try eating more slowly and chewing foods well rather than gulping food. Try drinking water before and with meals.
- Introduce one low glycemic index (GI) food a day. Or try one each meal. Low GI foods keep you feeling “fuller for longer”. Examples of lower GI foods include: dairy products, pasta, basmati rice, wholegrain breads, porridge, sweet potato, sweet corn, all legumes (e.g. baked beans, kidney beans, chickpeas) and most fruits (e.g. oranges, bananas, apples, pears and plums).
- Put some foods away out of sight, if necessary, or recommend not having...
tempting foods 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 on the table may be enough to satisfy their needs. This may include fresh fruit. Other low kilojoule snacks (in the fridge) may 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. Even with healthy snacks it is important to limit/monitor portion sizes.

- Try satisfying 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.

- Generally, modifications to diet habits are more successful with lifestyle and cognition changes. Consider whether other activities (such as walks or increased socialisation) may help. This can obviously also help with stress relief and maintaining or achieving a healthy weight.

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](http://www.daa.asn.au) (click on ‘Find an APD’).