



What hunger, appetite, and satiety feel like

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When you are [eating competent](#) and feed your child according to [the division of responsibility](#), you and your child eat as much as you want of food you enjoy. Food regulation is a powerful, flexible, and intuitive process that guides how much to eat, day-to-day, week-to-week, seasonally, and even annually and longer. You and your child develop eating competence by having regular and reliable meals and sit-down snacks, on the one hand, and having permission to eat, on the other. In the process, you and your child intuitively discover and trust your sensations of hunger, appetite and satiety.

Understand these descriptions but don't use them to guide eating and don't teach them. The descriptions help you give yourself and your child permission to eat. They help you understand what is going on with you intuitively. But they don't help you regulate your food intake. Don't convert this understanding into unnecessary and cumbersome rules: "I can eat when I feel this way but not that way." "It is okay to eat until I feel this way but not until I feel that way."

Above all, do not teach these descriptors to children (even with pictures or models). Children simply are unable to know how it feels when they are hungry or full and act accordingly. As with anything else they are taught and expected to do that is beyond them, it will overwhelm and frighten them and undermine their positive feelings about eating.

Famished	Extreme hunger, pronounced discomfort: shakiness, crankiness, headache. Urgency and desperation to eat, especially if there is no reassurance of being able to get enough food. Often results from food insecurity or extreme self-restraint.
Hunger, increased appetite	Physical experience of emptiness, perhaps mild discomfort such as shakiness, fatigue, headache. Tolerable and comfortable anticipation of eating, provided adequate amounts of rewarding food will soon be available. Heightened interest in food.
Hunger goes away	Physical experience of emptiness subsides along with discomfort from energy deficit; sense of relief increases. However, most people are reluctant to stop eating at this point because eating is still rewarding.
Appetite goes away	Satiety: Positive experience of readiness to stop eating. This is a more sustaining and rewarding endpoint to eating for most people than when hunger goes away. Food stops tasting so good (but is by no means repulsive) and there is a subjective experience of losing interest in eating.
Feeling full	For most, this is a pleasant, if occasional, endpoint to eating. It is a positive state of feeling filled up. Eating past satiety is rewarding if it follows a deliberate decision to eat more than usual, perhaps on a ceremonial occasion, because food tastes exceptionally good or because energy needs have suddenly increased.
Feeling stuffed	Virtually universally experienced as being a negative endpoint to eating. Negative physical state including extreme fullness, lethargy, physical discomfort, perhaps nausea. Accompanied by aversion toward eating and often a sense of chagrin at overeating and self-indulgence. Often arrived at as an unthinking or impulsive suspension of restraint.
Satter EM. Nutrition education with the Satter Eating Competence Model. <i>J Nutr Educ Behav.</i> 2007;39 (suppl):S189-S194. For a free copy of the article: http://bit.ly/ecSatterNutrEd	