

# SIGNS YOUR CHILD IS HUNGRY OR FULL

## The benefits of understanding your child's appetite regulation

Appetite regulation refers to the ability of your child to eat and stop eating in response to internal cues of hunger and fullness. While it may not seem like a logical connection, appetite regulation can play a big part in emotional regulation. It can also impact your child's willingness and desire to try new foods and to participate in mealtimes.

If your child is going too long without eating or eating too frequently, they may find it difficult to regulate their emotions, attention and energy levels.

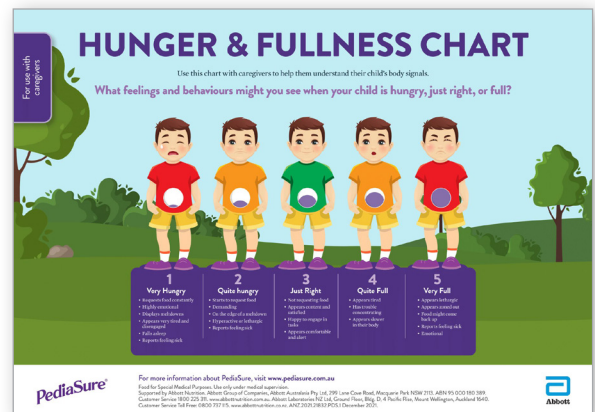
Here are some ways you can better understand your child's hunger and fullness signals.

### 1 Tune into your child's cues

Using a **hunger & fullness chart** can be useful to help you understand the behavioural cues you might be seeing in your child and how this links to their appetite.

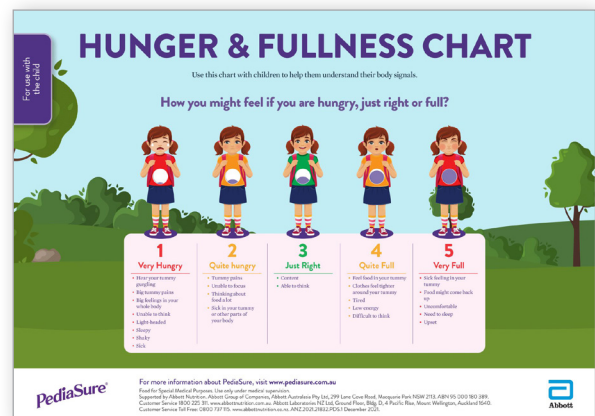
Hunger can be expressed in many different ways and using a hunger and fullness chart can help you to narrow down and understand your child's cues.

You may for example see a specific pattern in their behaviour throughout the day, or the child may become lethargic. Track their cues to help you maximise their nutritional intake.



### 2 Work with your child's appetite cues

Using a **hunger & fullness chart** to help your child understand their own internal cues and how their body feels when they get too hungry or too full. Use these opportunities to connect with your child and help them learn what they could do differently next time. For example, if your child is starting to feel their tummy rumbling, support them to communicate how they feel. As they start to become more in tune with their hunger and fullness levels, work with them to keep in the green zone so they don't get too hungry or too full. For example, they might eat a bit more at a set mealtime, eat a different type of food to fill up their tummy or check in with their body if they are starting to feel too full during a mealtime.



### 3 Set up regular mealtimes

Set up a predictable meal, mid-meal schedule and offer food every 2–3 hours. This will help your child's natural digestion rhythms so they can become both hungry and full. This will also help you and your child to feel safe and calm in knowing if they don't feel like eating much at one meal, there will be another one coming later in the day.

### 4 Maximise intake when your child feels most hungry

If you have any worries about your child's growth or nutrition intake, it can be helpful to offer foods higher in energy when your child displays more hunger like avocado, egg, full fat dairy foods, lentils, legumes and nut butters. You can mix a powdered oral nutrition support product to foods or drinks your child already enjoys such as milkshakes, smoothies, custards, or muffins. This can help boost their nutritional content and make every mouthful count without increasing the volume of food that needs to be eaten.



For recipes, visit the PediaSure website.

For additional support for your child, speak to an Accredited Practising Dietitian.

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