

Understanding False Hunger

Feeling hungry when your body doesn't need food can lead to unnecessary snacking and unwanted weight gain. This is especially common with antipsychotic medication — and understanding it can help you manage it.

“Not all hunger is real hunger. Learning to pause, check in with yourself, and respond intentionally is one of the most useful things you can do for your health during recovery.”

WHY IT MATTERS WITH FEP

Antipsychotic medication is a major cause of false hunger — it directly alters appetite signals in the brain, making you feel hungry when your body doesn't actually need food.

THE KEY INSIGHT

Not all hunger means your body needs food — learning to tell the difference is one of the most useful skills for managing your weight and health during recovery.

WHAT HELPS MOST

Pausing before eating and checking in with yourself can break the automatic cycle and help you make a more intentional choice.

COMMON CAUSES — AND WHAT TO TRY

- 1 DEHYDRATION**

Thirst is often mistaken for hunger.

Try: Drink a glass of water · wait 10–30 minutes · recheck your hunger before eating
- 2 EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS**

Stress, boredom, or sadness can trigger the urge to eat even when you're not physically hungry.

Try: Go for a walk · journal · exercise · clean or organize · deep breathing
- 3 MEDICATION SIDE EFFECTS**

Some antipsychotics directly increase appetite — recognizing this can help you manage it.

Try: Eat at scheduled times: breakfast, lunch, snack, dinner · keep healthy options available · use distraction techniques
- 4 HABITS & ENVIRONMENTAL CUES**

Eating while watching TV or scrolling creates “automatic” hunger at those times.

Try: Pause before eating · ask: am I truly hungry? · decide if you can wait until your next meal · practice mindful eating
- 5 LACK OF SLEEP**

Poor sleep increases hunger hormones, making you feel hungrier than you are.

Try: Rest or nap if possible · light movement · review your sleep habits and aim for consistent quality sleep
- 6 PROCESSED FOODS**

Foods high in sugar, salt, and fat drive cravings and can lead to overeating.

Try: Limit processed snacks at home · buy smaller portions for treats · choose whole foods more often

SMART SNACKING — LOW CALORIE, HIGH VOLUME

- These options help you feel full and satisfied without excess calories. Keep them on hand:
- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Vegetable sticks with salsa or hummus | Air-popped popcorn |
| Greek yogurt with berries | Rice cakes with peanut butter |
| Cucumber or zucchini with cottage cheese | Apple slices with cinnamon |

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Not all hunger means your body needs food
 - ✓ Pause and assess before eating
 - ✓ Stay hydrated and well-rested
 - ✓ Keep nourishing, satisfying foods available
 - ✓ Practice mindful eating habits
- By understanding false hunger, you can make more intentional choices and better support your health.**