



Crush Cravings

Break Free from Emotional Eating

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Take Back Control from Binge Eating



We've all been there... Reaching for chocolate when stress strikes, grabbing snacks out of boredom or eating when we're not even hungry... Emotional eating is more common than you think, but over time, it can damage our relationship with food, leading to weight gain, guilt and frustration.



Emotional eating is not a lack of willpower - it's often a response to deeper feelings and triggers. Understanding this is the first step towards reclaiming control over your food choices and your life. We'll focus on building awareness, identifying triggers and creating healthier habits. You deserve a balanced, joyful relationship with food and this guide is here to support you at every step.



This program is designed to guide you through breaking the cycle of emotional eating with practical, research-backed strategies. Whether you need short-term relief or are looking for long-term change, this plan provides a structured path to success with tools and tips to make each step achievable.

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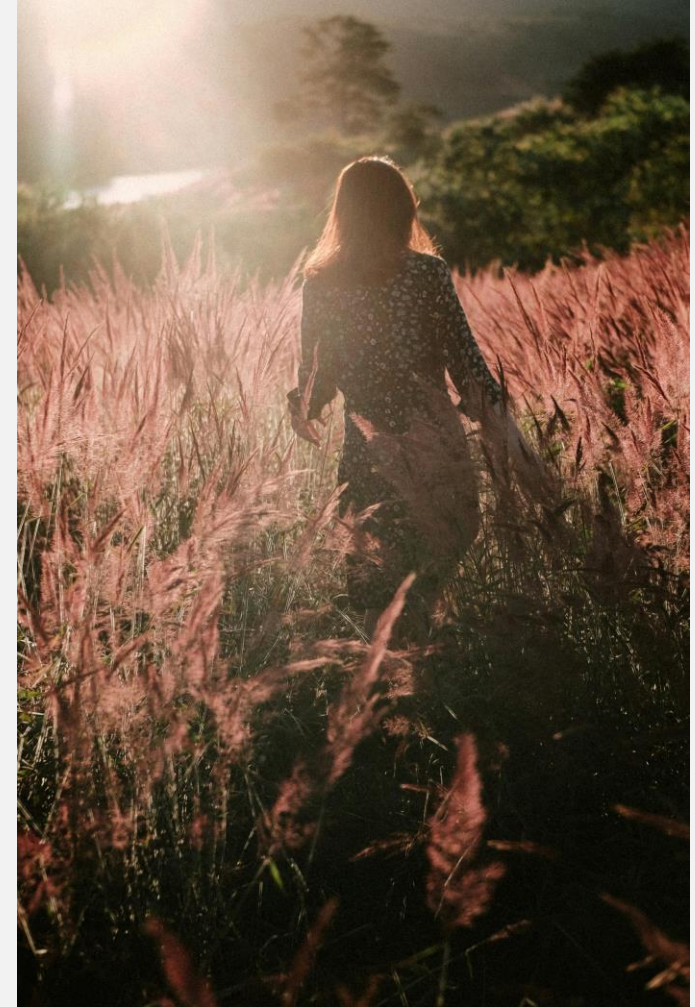
Take control and silence your cravings

References



Short-Term Plan

Building Awareness and Gaining Control



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Week 1: Track Your Eating and Emotions

In the first four weeks, the goal is to become more aware of your emotional eating patterns and triggers. This foundational step is crucial in identifying what's behind your eating habits and beginning the process of change.

Building awareness is the foundation for breaking emotional eating habits. By tracking what, when and why you eat, you gain clarity about your triggers and eating patterns. Emotional eating often happens because we can't process what we're feeling. When you become more aware of your body and can label emotions accurately, you start to regain control, reducing the need to soothe with food.

Action Plan

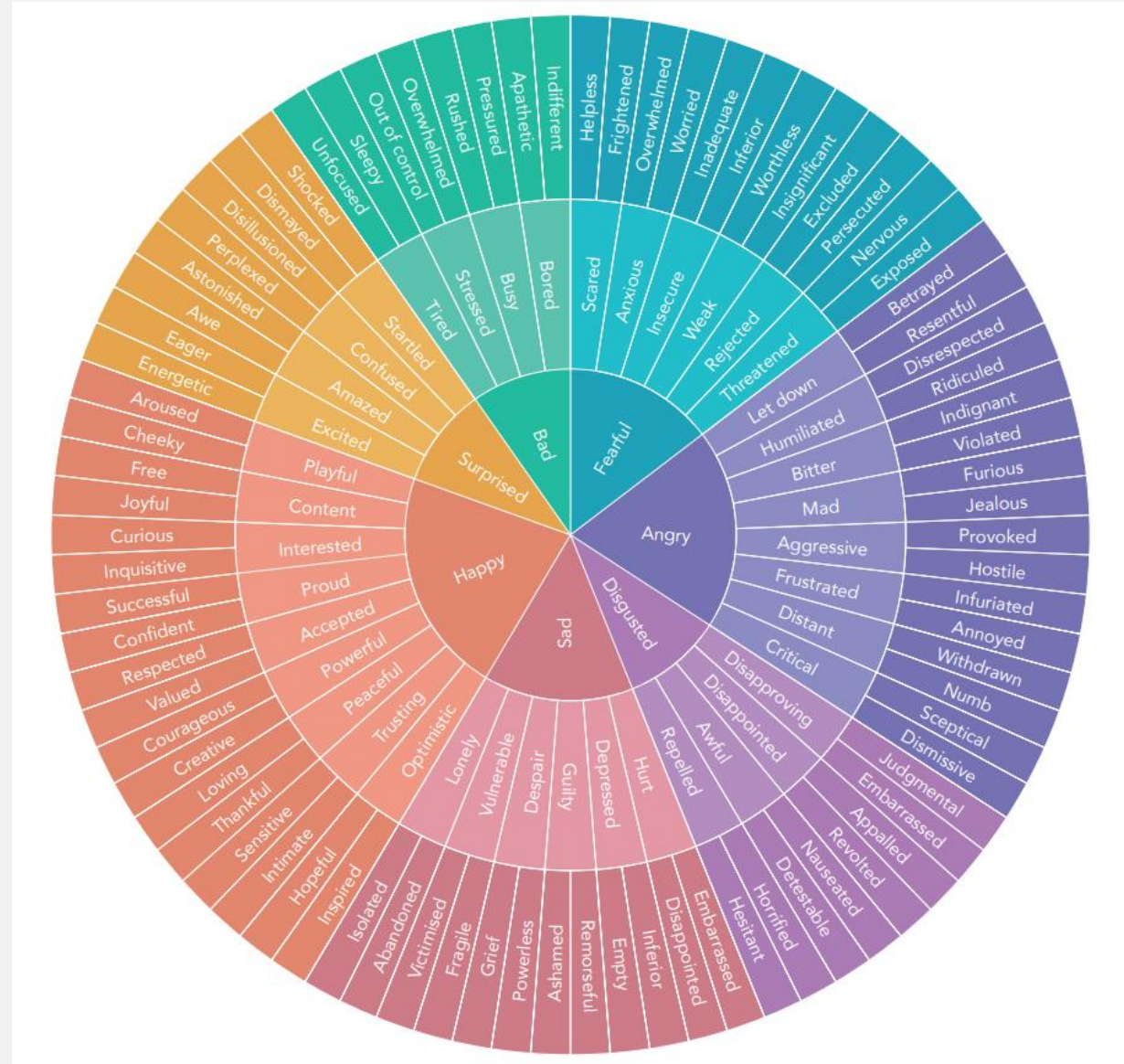
1. Keep a detailed food and mood diary. Write down everything you eat, the time you ate it and how you felt before and after eating.
 - Tip: Use the enclosed tracker and emotions wheel to help identify and record everything. Honesty and detail are key.
 - Tip: Consider tracking your menstrual cycle to help link feelings and behaviours.
2. Reflect on your entries at the end of each day to spot any emotional patterns.

This process helps you become aware of emotional triggers, which is the first step toward change.

Daily Food & Mood Tracker

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks	Notes
What did I eat?					
How did I feel? (use the emotions wheel)					
What caused those feelings?					
How do I actually want to feel? (use the emotions wheel)					
What can I do to create those feelings without food?					

The Emotions Wheel



Week 2: Practice Mindful Eating

Mindful eating helps break the cycle of mindless snacking and emotional eating. By slowing down and paying attention to your body's signals, you'll recognise when you're truly full and satisfied. Mindful eating reconnects you to your hunger and fullness signals, allowing you to eat for nourishment rather than emotional reasons.

Action Plan

1. Dedicate time to eating without distractions; no TV, phone or work.

- Tip: Set a timer for 20 minutes to make sure your meal isn't rushed.

2. Take smaller bites and chew slowly. Pause halfway through your meal to assess your hunger level.

3. Engage All Senses During Meals: Focus on the colours, textures, smells and flavours of your food. This will help you reconnect with the experience of eating.

4. Incorporate Mind-Body Practices. As emotional eaters, many of us are disconnected from our bodies. Try to integrate mind-body practices such as breathing exercises. These practices promote body awareness and help you become more attuned to hunger and fullness signals. Focus on how your body feels during and after meals.

Studies show that mindful eating reduces emotional eating and overeating, helping you regain control over your eating habits.

Week 3: Identify Emotional Triggers

Recognising your emotional triggers empowers you to respond to emotions without using food as a crutch. Practice distinguishing between physical hunger and emotional hunger. Physical hunger comes gradually, while emotional hunger is sudden and craves specific comfort foods (like ice cream or crisps). Awareness is the first step. By recognising the difference between emotional and physical hunger, you'll begin to understand when food is filling an emotional void rather than physical need.

Action Plan

1. Review your food diary to find patterns. Do you reach for food when stressed, bored or upset?
 - Tip: Start a list of your common triggers and keep it visible, so you're more mindful when they arise.
2. Identify three emotional situations that lead to eating. Over time, you'll notice patterns and gain greater insight into your emotional triggers.
 - Identifying and addressing emotional triggers is essential for managing emotional eating.

The more you acknowledge and accept your emotions, the less likely you are to suppress them with food. Emotional resilience isn't about never feeling stress or sadness - it's about responding to those feelings in a healthy, constructive way.

Week 4: Develop Healthy Coping Strategies

Emotional eating is often a quick fix for deeper emotional needs. Replacing this with healthier alternatives creates lasting change. Emotional eating happens automatically. By pausing and redirecting, you build the space to make conscious decisions rather than reacting impulsively. Choose non-food ways to manage emotions.

Action Plan

1. When an emotional trigger arises, pause and take 10 deep breaths.

- Tip: Before reaching for food, pause and ask yourself what you're really feeling. Can you wait for five minutes before eating? Often, the urge will pass.

2. Keep a list of go-to activities that help manage emotions without food. For example, take a walk, call a friend, listen to music or do something creative. Experiment with relaxation techniques such as yoga and meditation.

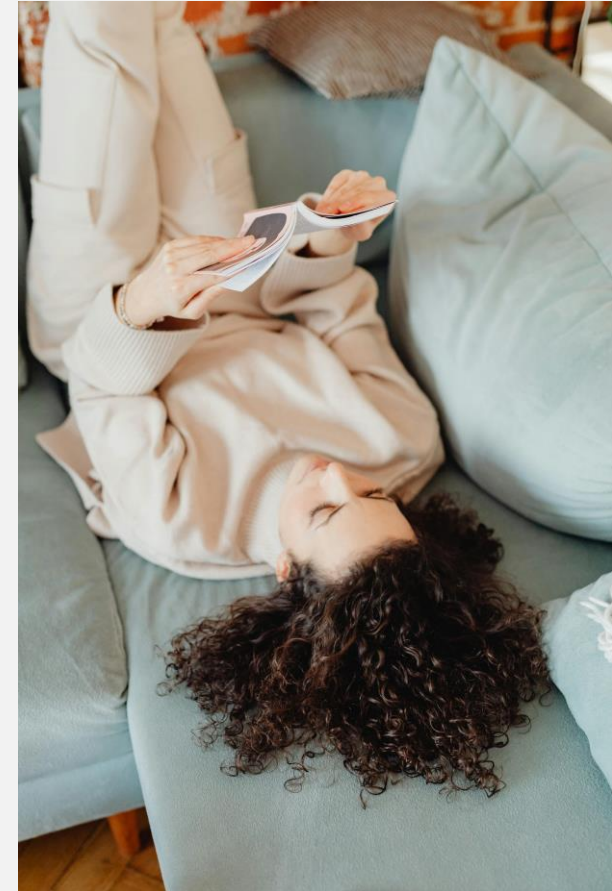
- Tip: Below is list of positive coping mechanisms to consider;

Walking
Journalling
Self-care

Fresh air
Call a friend
Coach / therapy

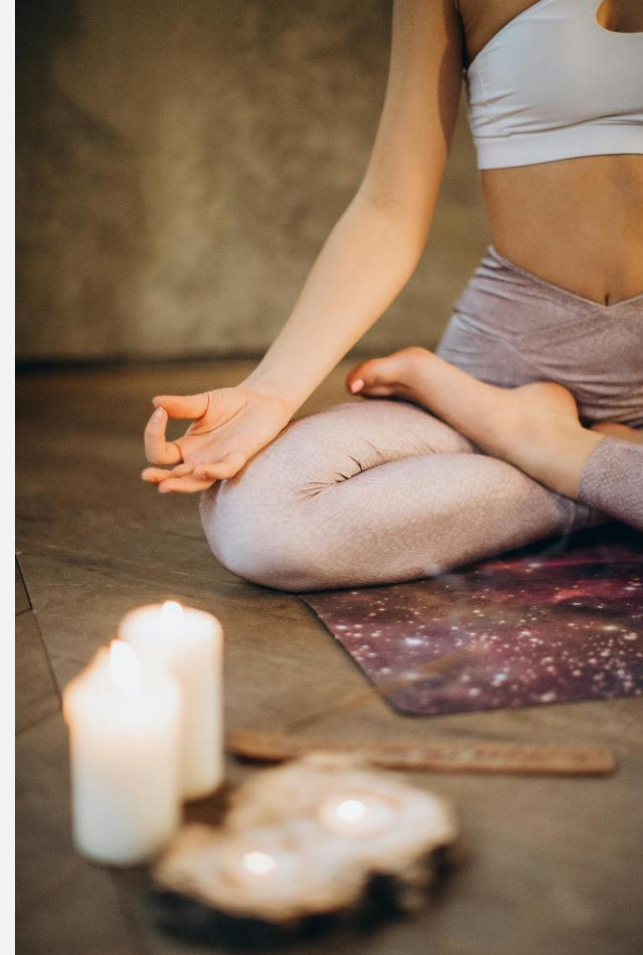
Time alone
Reading
Connect with others

3. Identify activities that make you feel good and write them down for easy access during moments of stress. Building non-food coping strategies reduces the reliance on emotional eating and supports overall emotional health.



Medium-Term Plan

Reinforcing Healthy Habits



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Month 2: Reframing Food

Over the last few months, you've expanded your ability to cope with emotions and started to adapt how you think about food. You're well on your way to creating a stronger, more resilient relationship with yourself and with what you eat. This is about progress, not perfection - so keep building on these habits. You're doing an amazing job and every step brings you closer to a more balanced and fulfilling life. When you reframe food as fuel, you start making more deliberate, health-driven choices that improve both your physical and mental well-being. Planning your meals also reduces impulsivity and reinforces the idea that food is there to nourish, not to pacify emotions.

Action Plan

1. Reframe Food as Fuel. Move from viewing food as emotional comfort to seeing it as fuel for your body. Learn more about nutrition and focus on how different foods make you feel physically. Aim to nourish your body with balanced meals that stabilise your mood and energy.

- Tip: Avoid an overly restrictive diet - this phase is about balance, not deprivation.

2. Create a Weekly Meal Plan. Plan your meals ahead of time to reduce impulsive eating. Choose nutrient-rich, whole foods, such as lean proteins, whole grains and plenty of vegetables. When you take the time to plan, you're less likely to turn to quick, emotionally-driven food choices.

- Tip: Every Sunday, spend 20 minutes planning your meals for the week. Stick it on your fridge as a visual reminder. This removes the "what should I eat?" decision fatigue that can lead to emotional eating.

Months 3-4: The Role of Micronutrients

Magnesium and vitamin D are essential for mood balance. By ensuring your body has enough of these key nutrients, you can improve mental resilience and reduce the emotional fluctuations that often lead to overeating.

Action Plan

1. Boost Your Mental Health with Magnesium-Rich Foods. Magnesium plays a significant role in managing anxiety and stress, two key triggers for emotional eating. Add more magnesium-rich foods like leafy greens, almonds, pumpkin seeds and dark chocolate to your diet.

- Tip: Magnesium helps regulate cortisol levels (your body's stress hormone) and promotes a calm state of mind, reducing emotional eating impulses.

2. Focus on Vitamin D for Mood Regulation. Vitamin D is often linked to sunlight, but did you know it's also a crucial factor in mood regulation? Low vitamin D levels are associated with higher rates of depression and mood swings. Boost your intake through fortified foods, fatty fish or supplements if needed - especially during the winter months when sunlight is limited.

- Tip: Try incorporating a handful of pumpkin seeds as a snack or adding salmon to your meal plan twice a week for an easy boost in both magnesium and vitamin D.

Months 5-6: Challenge Your Food Rules

Removing the emotional charge from food and breaking free from rigid food rules decreases the likelihood of binge eating or emotionally overindulging. This strategy fosters a healthy, balanced relationship with all foods.

Action Plan

1. Challenge Your Food Rules. Many of us hold rigid beliefs about food - what's "good" and "bad." Start identifying any food rules you've internalised over the years and question them. For example, if you've always labelled chocolate as "bad," allow yourself a small piece occasionally without guilt.

- Tip: The goal is to neutralise emotional power food has over you.

1. Practice Food Flexibility. Experiment with flexible eating. Incorporate small indulgences mindfully and balance them with nutritious meals. Let yourself enjoy favourite foods in moderation. This practice will teach you that no single food can derail your progress and that indulgences, in moderation, can coexist with a healthy lifestyle.

- Tip: Challenge one food rule per week by adding a small serving of a previously "forbidden" food to your meal. Eat it mindfully and notice how you feel before, during and after.

Long-Term Plan

Sustaining and Strengthening Change



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Months 7-9: The Gut-Brain Axis

Congratulations on making it this far! You've spent months building new habits and transforming your relationship with food and now it's time to take it to the next level. The long-term focus is about deepening that control, reinforcing your emotional resilience and exploring new strategies. You're now ready to fully embed these practices into your life for good, so food no longer controls you but serves as a source of nourishment and pleasure.

Action Plan

1. Explore the Gut-Brain Axis: New research highlights the connection between the gut and brain, also known as the gut-brain axis, which significantly impacts mood and emotional regulation. Support your mental health by incorporating more prebiotic and probiotic-rich foods into your diet. Add fermented foods like kimchi, kefir and sauerkraut, as well as high-fibre foods like oats to nourish your gut and, in turn, improve your mood regulation.

- Tip: Enjoy a side of kimchi or sauerkraut with your meals to support gut health.

2. Support Emotional Regulation. Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fatty fish, flaxseed and chia seeds, have been shown to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. Including these foods regularly in your diet can help you better manage emotional stress and reduce cravings linked to mood fluctuations.

- Tip: Aim for two portions of fatty fish (like salmon or mackerel) per week.

Your gut health is directly tied to your mental health and by nourishing your gut with the right foods, you can significantly reduce emotional stress. Omega-3s, on the other hand, help regulate the chemicals in your brain that control mood and stress responses, reducing emotional eating triggered by mood swings.

Months 10-12: Balance Blood Sugar

Fluctuating blood sugar can contribute to mood swings, which often trigger emotional eating. Stabilising blood sugar helps prevent the physical crashes that lead to cravings.

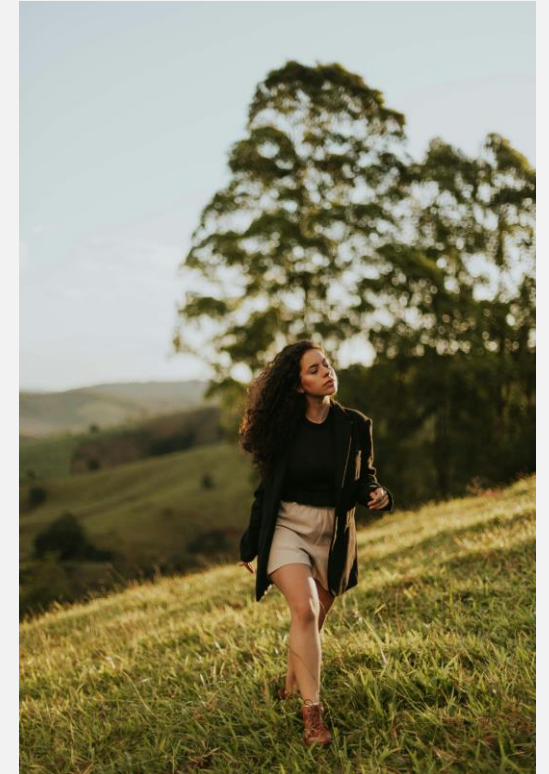
Action Plan

1. Leverage Nutrition to Balance Blood Sugar and Mood. Focus on low glycemic index (GI) foods like whole grains, beans and non-starchy vegetables, which release energy slowly, keeping your blood sugar stable throughout the day.

- Tip: Reduce refined carbs and sugars that cause spikes and crashes in energy, which often leave you feeling emotionally vulnerable. Try out some of the swaps on the next page!

- Tip: Also, include protein with every meal to help keep blood sugar levels stable.

2. Practice Fasting or Time-Restricted Eating (TRE). New research suggests that time-restricted eating promotes natural appetite regulation and helps prevent late-night binges. Start with a 12-hour eating window (e.g., 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.) and gradually reduce it to 10 or 8 hours if it feels manageable. This approach not only regulates eating habits but helps align your eating schedule with your natural circadian rhythm, improving both mood and energy.



Try these Refined Carb Swaps

Research from Diabetes Care shows that diets high in refined sugars and carbohydrates can lead to poor insulin sensitivity, while low-glycemic foods can significantly improve insulin function within weeks.

Instead of this...	Try this...
White rice	Brown / wild rice or riced cauliflower
White bread	Wholewheat or wholegrain bread
Pasta	Wholewheat pasta, spaghetti squash or courgetti
Chips	Cauliflower mash, sweet potatoes or cooked and cooled white potatoes (with skin on)
Sugary breakfast cereal, cornflakes	High-fibre, low sugar cereal or low sugar bran flakes
Instant oats	Steel-cut / rolled oats
Crisps	Nuts or raw veggies for dipping

Embrace Your Power to Transform

Breaking free from emotional eating isn't just about willpower; it's about self-awareness, compassion and growth. It's a journey of reclaiming control over your choices and with each small step, you're rewriting your relationship with food and emotions. Remember, setbacks are normal. They don't erase your progress; they teach you resilience. What matters most is that you keep moving forward, learning and adapting. Every choice to pause, reflect and choose differently strengthens your foundation for long-term change.

Imagine a life where food becomes nourishment, not a reaction to stress or sadness. Picture feeling in control, grounded and free from the cycle of emotional eating. You've already started this transformation and it's the cumulative effect of these daily actions that will lead to a healthier, more fulfilling future.

You don't have to do this alone. If you ever feel unsure, stuck or just need encouragement, reach out. Your journey is unique and I'm here to support you in any way you need. Together, we can make lasting changes and I'll be with you every step of the way - cheering you on as you move toward a more empowered, mindful relationship with food. Keep going, you've got this!

Whether you're just getting started or ready to take things to the next level, we're here to make the process simple, motivating and completely focused on your unique goals. Together, we'll make sure you get the maximum benefit from everything we have to offer. Let's thrive!



The small print

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Disclaimer

At Thrive Nutrition, we want to make sure you're fully informed. While our action plans and guides offer expert advice and practical strategies for better health, they do not replace medical care. These guides are designed to support your wellness journey, but they are not medical advice and we don't claim to diagnose, treat or cure any medical conditions.

Our plans are created independently of your medical history, medications (past or present) or any ongoing treatments. That's why it's essential that you check in with your doctor, especially if you're being treated or supervised for a specific condition. They'll ensure that any changes you make work safely alongside your current care.

Your health is personal and we're here to support you on your journey. But it's important to keep your healthcare provider in the loop about anything that might affect your wellbeing. Let's make sure you're supported on all fronts as you move forward!

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