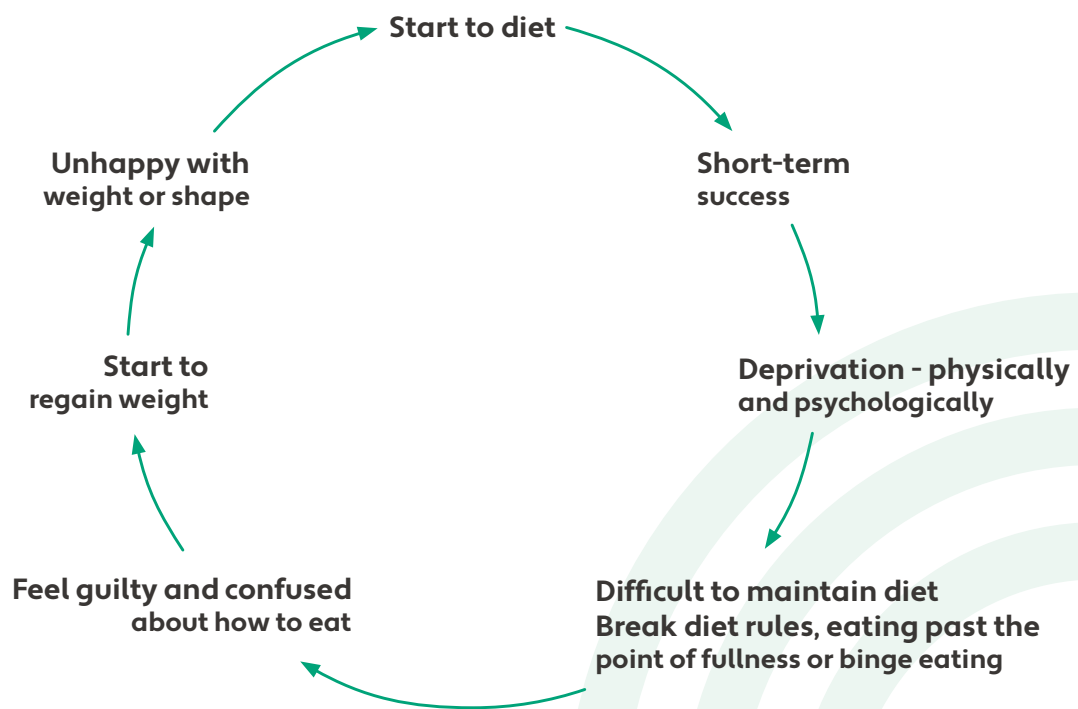




## Diet cycle

If you have dieted in the past, you may remember the feeling of success when you started to lose weight. It's likely you will also remember feeling frustrated, defeated and disappointed when the diet stopped working. You are not alone! 95% of people who diet regain back the weight they lost (1,2). Despite what the diet industry wants you to think, it's not your fault! Weight regain happens due to a combination of physical and psychological reasons that are explained in the Diet Cycle below.



### **Start to diet:**

People start to diet for a number of reasons. It may be to lose weight, control body shape, 'feel better' or feel more 'in control'. Diets usually involve rigid, external rules about what can and can't be eaten, often labelling food as 'good' or 'bad'. Many diets limit the amount of food allowed per day. This encourages individuals to ignore their body cues of hunger and fullness. Diets don't consider a person's current eating style, food beliefs, likes or dislikes or relationship with food. As a result, diets are often a much less pleasurable way of eating.

### **Short-term success:**

In the short term, dieting can result in initial weight loss. Individuals may feel successful, in control, and may even receive compliments from others. The diet appears to be working and they feel encouraged to continue. Over time, people who diet may start to feel unsure about the way they previously used to eat. Diets tell people what to eat but they don't address an individual's relationship with their body or their appetite or the reasons why they feel they need to diet in the first place. Additionally, these underlying triggers can remain during the dieting process or even when the diet ends (3).

### **Deprivation:**

- Psychological symptoms of deprivation: individuals may feel more irritable than usual, have trouble concentrating, lose interest in hobbies and socialising with others and begin constantly thinking about food.
- Physical symptoms of deprivation: the human body is miraculous and puts in place protective measures to support survival, including an improved ability to store fat, a slowed metabolism and a lowered body temperature in order to use less energy. Individuals may

notice intense hunger and cravings for food, a reduction in strength, a lack of energy and feelings of fatigue. Other signs include dizziness and headaches and increased sensitivity to the cold (4,5).

### **Break diet rules:**

- As a result of not receiving enough nutrition, an individual may become more sensitive to the sight and smell of food. They may start to crave specific foods, particularly those that were forbidden or taboo on the diet.
- Individuals may begin to eat past the point of fullness and over-eat and/or binge eat (6). They may develop all or nothing thinking and recognise statements such as "I've had one biscuit, I may as well have the lot!"
- When diet rules are broken, individuals may feel out of control around food, feel as if they have failed, guilty and upset.
- Negative moods or emotions or ongoing body dissatisfaction may also contribute to breaking diet rules.

### **Start to regain weight**

- Due to the body's protective measures outlined above, 95% of people who diet will regain the weight they lost. After repeated diets, losing weight may become harder. Research shows that there are very few people who maintain long-term weight loss (7) and that 'one third to two thirds of individuals who diet regain more weight than they have lost (2).

### **Unhappy with weight or shape.**

- People who diet may find that their body image has worsened with each diet attempt. After weight regain, they find themselves back at the start of the diet cycle feeling unhappy with their weight or shape.

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