



7 steps to MINDFUL EATING

Eating foods high in sugar, fat and salt will stimulate your desire to eat more! Once you pop, you can't stop! Mindfulness is an ability we all possess. Mindful eating is deliberately paying attention and being aware of what we are eating. It involves all the senses and causes us to be aware of all colours, textures, flavours, tastes and sounds of drinking and eating.

1 Notice your food

You are three times as likely to eat the first thing you see on the table. It is wise to place your most healthful food where you will notice it first. Start your meal with salads or thin soups that prevent you from overdoing high-calorie entrees later.

Scanning the buffet before scooping up will help you to pick more nutritious food first. It helps you make smart decisions like going for light starters. Seating yourself 40 feet from the buffet will help qualify your decision to go back for second or third servings.

2 Pick a small plate

A smaller plate will help you to dish up smaller amounts of food. Take smaller bites and chew your food at least 15 times. The longer you chew, the more time you take to finish the meal. Chewing your food longer will also help control your portion size and make you eat less to prevent weight gain. The longer you chew your food, the easier it is

to digest the food. The slower you eat, the more you savour the flavour!

3 Observe the texture of food

The texture of what you eat greatly affects your enjoyment of food. While dining, enjoy the texture of food such as soft yoghurt and soups, chewy meats, crunchy nuts, carrots, and apples. You will discover the secret of how to become content, once you are able to fully appreciate the basic activities of eating. Each sip of liquid and the bite of food will be fresh and delicious! After a long hike, when you drink even plain water, you will appreciate how wonderful it is.

4 Make it colourful

Eat with your eyes. It is important to enjoy the colours of the foods on the plate like brown rice, red, orange or yellow fruit and green leafy vegetables. A little goes a long way, when you enjoy something, especially colourful. Mindful eating is a good way to help you enjoy your food, wholeheartedly.

THE LIGHTER SIDE

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5 Watch out for environmental & emotional triggers

Before you start eating, just take a few seconds to rate your hunger. Your goal is to eat between levels 4 and 6 in the hunger-satiety rating scale. Physical hunger builds up gradually several hours after each meal. But emotional eating and craving will arise unexpectedly. Emotional eating will encourage grabbing more food. If you have recently eaten and still find yourself craving for food, watch out for emotional triggers such as anger, loneliness, worry, stress, boredom, and frustration. Find out which emotion triggers you to eat more and reach out for help. Call your friend or go for a walk, or do some stretching exercises to relieve your stress.

6 Rate your hunger

Eat only when you are hungry and stop eating when you are satisfied. When you are hungry, you may experience a few of the following symptoms like stomach pangs, irritability, emptiness of the stomach, low energy, or difficulty in concentrating. Try not to hold your hunger until level 1 or 2, which often leads to overeating. Catching the hunger early will naturally prevent you from overeating and at the same time you can concentrate on picking nutritious food.

7 Track your food and your physical activity

Most people do not realise how much they eat every day. Tracking the food will help you to understand where the extra calories are coming from. It helps you to focus on the different varieties of food and control your portion size. Tracking will help you to understand the composition of foods you eat and the nutrients you get from them. Once you start tracking your food, you will be surprised to learn how many calories are in the little treats like candies and beverages you are enjoying every day. It also helps you to identify and incorporate the missing food groups such as dairy, vegetables and nuts. Similarly, tracking your physical activity will help you to understand how often you are physically active or inactive.

Recording activities will help you to track your progress over time and may impel you to add more activity to your daily routine. Through mindful eating you will learn what food best fuels your exercise and work.

You will also realise that unhealthy food is not as tasty and healthy as you thought before. Even for people with a healthy weight, a poor diet can still lead to major health risks! By making smart food choices you can protect yourself from getting chronic diseases.

Hunger-Satiety Rating Scale

Full	10 = Stuffed to the point of feeling sick
	9 = Very uncomfortably full, need to loosen your belt
	8 = Uncomfortably full, feel stuffed
	7 = Very full, feel as if you have overeaten
	6 = Comfortably full, satisfied
Neutral	5 = Comfortable, neither hungry nor full
	4 = Beginning signs and symptoms of hunger
	3 = Hungry with several hunger symptoms, ready to eat
	2 = Very hungry, unable to concentrate
Hungry	1 = Starving, dizzy, irritable



References

www.diabetes.org
www.mayoclinic.org
www.eatright.org
www.hpb.gov.sg

*About the author: Kohila Govindaraju is an accredited nutritionist and director of THE BERRIES Nutrition Consulting, an avid blogger (kohilag.wordpress.com) and prolific author of magazine articles on food and nutrition, including a book titled *How to Lose Weight Without Hunger* published by PatientsEngage.*