

## Mindful Eating

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### What is mindful eating?

Mindful eating is an approach to food that focuses on being fully present while you're eating. It also increases awareness of your thoughts, senses and feelings during and after you eat. It helps you appreciate food and helps develop a healthier relationship with food.

### The benefits of mindful eating:

- ✓ Helps you become more in tune with your body
- ✓ Promotes a healthy relationship with food
- ✓ Enhances the eating experience
- ✓ May support a healthy weight
- ✓ Can help support emotional eating and binge eating

### Five ways to become a mindful eater

1. Examine your hunger and appetite. Hunger is your physiological need for food, whereas appetite is your desire for food. Before you begin eating, try to check in with how your body is feeling. How hungry are you? Are you eating because you are physically hungry or out of boredom or anxiety? Being severely hungry before a meal can make it difficult to slow down and eat mindfully. Commit to incorporating balanced meals throughout the day so that at mealtimes you aren't ravenous. Recognise when you are eating for reasons other than physical hunger. Sometimes emotions can trigger hunger; therefore, it's important to identify what drives your eating.
2. Bring all your senses to the table. Pay attention to how food looks, to the different flavour profiles in your meal and the smell of the food. Does it feel crunchy or smooth when you take a bite? How does the food sound when you chew it? Do any of these tastes or textures change as you continue to eat the meal? These are just a few examples of questions you can ask yourself during the mindful eating experience.
3. Slow down. Slowing down can allow your body to recognise when it's full. When your stomach has taken enough food, a hormone called leptin is realised from fat tissues which sends signals to the brain of fullness. It is thought that it takes about 20 minutes for this process to happen. Take time to chew your food, savour the flavour and appreciate each bit. If you find you are devouring your food, place your cutlery down between each mouthful. Give yourself time to digest the meal and get in tune with satiety and feelings of fullness that you get from eating.
4. Limit distractions. To fully immerse yourself in mindful eating, it is important to disconnect from electronics and major distractions. Silence your phone, turn off the TV and sit down at the table so you are fully present in the meal.
5. Avoid labelling foods. All types of foods can play a part in a healthy and varied diet. Instead of focusing on what foods are 'good' or 'bad', focus on achieving a variety of different foods that provide satisfaction, enjoyment and nourishment.

### Five questions to ask BEFORE EATING

1. What is my level of hunger?
2. Will this nourish my body?
3. How will I feel after eating this?
4. Do I truly want this?
5. Am I fully present to eat and enjoy my meal?

### Five questions to ask AFTER EATING

1. What are my hunger levels now?
2. How full do I feel?
3. Did I get the nourishment I need?
4. Did I delight my taste buds?
5. Has the meal kept me energised and full?

### Alternative NON-FOOD ways to cope with difficult emotions

1. Journal
2. Practise deep breathing
3. Take a short walk
4. Call a loved one/professional
5. Do something fun!