

## Diabetes: Mindful eating

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Being “mindful” is a popular term these days. It means being present in the moment and giving your full attention to what you are doing **right now**. Mindful eating is slowing down and enjoying your food without eating too much. Many of us eat too much for different reasons other than hunger. We eat because we are bored, tired, lonely, or simply out of habit. Have you ever had too much to eat while watching tv or working at your computer?

Eating is a social event for almost all cultures. We relate eating to comfort and often forget that eating is also required to nourish our body of nutrients, vitamins and minerals so we can be healthy. Food can be even more delicious and enjoyable when we **take time** to eat a healthy and balanced meal alone or with the company of our family and friends.

We are surrounded by external and internal cues to eat. External cues such as scents that fill the air in the mall and the street, commercials on tv and just about everywhere you look- there are cues tempting us to eat something. Internal cues can be certain times of day, happy or sad events such as celebrating a success with a hot fudge sundae, or eating the whole pizza because you are sad. I’m sure you can think of many of your own examples.

Here are some tips to help you become a more mindful eater. **The bottom line: slow down, chew up your food completely and enjoy every bite. You will eat less and be more satisfied.**

## **Am I hungry?**

- Be mindful of the real physical cues that tell you if you are hungry (grouchy, headache, empty feeling).
- Do NOT use your stomach as your indication of hunger since this organ is also a strong sensor of emotion.
- Sit down and eat at a table.
- Take time to eat.
- Enjoy your meal times and avoid distractions such as the television or the computer. **Turn off the TV and computer during meals!**
- Enjoy meal time with your family or by yourself.

## **Slow down.**

- Make the first bite (at least) of every meal and each different food a mindful bite.
- Where did the food come from?
- How many people worked to get that food to your table?
- Think about the shape and the color.
- Feel the texture in your mouth.
- Taste the salty, sweet, sour, creamy flavors that fill your mouth.

## **Eat only what you enjoy.**

- Don't eat food just because it is there.
- Don't be afraid to leave some food on your plate.
- Once that food is on your plate, nobody else is going to starve because you don't eat it; you are the only one who will pay the price if you overeat.

**Remember that it takes your brain about 20 minutes to realize that your belly is satisfied.**

- Try to take at least 20 minutes to eat your meal.
- Take a walk. Stand up and stretch at least once every hour.
- Think you're hungry, but know you're not? Make yourself a cup of tea, or drink a glass of water.
- Be aware of what type of external cue might be fooling you.
- Lie down for 10 minutes and close your eyes, maybe take a nap. People make poor food choices when sleepy.
- Take deep breaths, bring yourself to the moment and focus on what you are really wanting.
- Prepare meals for you and your family. Even if this just means putting together balanced portions of convenience foods. Don't forget the veggies!
- Home-cooked meals cost less, taste better, are much healthier and you can use the spices and flavors you like.

**Eat only when you are hungry.**

- Be aware of the real physical cues of hunger.
- Be aware of the external cues and make a plan to combat them.
- Be aware of the internal cues that can cause you to overeat and focus all of your energy toward healthy goals during these times.

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