

Mindful Eating

From the Dietitian's Desk



We live in a fast-paced, multi-tasking, instant gratification society - each of which contributes to our tendency to choose foods based on convenience, simplicity, and speed of the entire eating process. Because of this, we tend to forget that food is meant to nourish our bodies and should be cherished and enjoyed! Studies show that individuals who eat slowly and without distractions (in front of the TV, at the computer, in the car) *eat less* and are *more satisfied* with what they ate. Take the time to evaluate your eating environment(s). Do you eat at the table? Are you rushed? Do you eat with others or alone? Are you sitting down to eat? Making small changes to your eating habits can have a strong positive impact on your relationship with food. Here are a few tips:

- Sit down to eat
- Enjoy the company of others while you eat
- Environment: light a candle, clean off the kitchen table, place a centerpiece on the table that brings you joy

Where: Sit down! Eating should be done in a dedicated space without distraction, ideally at a comfortable table. Avoid eating in front of the TV, at a computer, or in the car. If you must eat in these environments, be sure to portion out your meal or snack in advance to avoid mindless eating.

When: First and most importantly, eat when you are hungry. Most of us do well with a routine, and your body will appreciate knowing that it can expect to be fed!

How: Slowly - enjoy the smell, texture, and taste! Aim to chew for 10-15 seconds per bite.

What: While the food itself may (and hopefully do) vary, we can all benefit from paying attention to the amounts we eat. If you fall prey to the 'finish your plate' mentality, try using a smaller plate or bowl. If you tend to snack, pre-portion what you will eat in advance instead of serving from a large dish or grabbing handfuls from a bag of food.

Why: Part of mindful eating is recognizing the difference between habitual, emotional, and physical hunger and respecting your body's true physical hunger. It may sound obvious, but we can positively impact our health by simply eating when we are hungry and stopping when we're full.