



10 Tips | How mindful eating can help you reach your health goals

Mindful Eating is based on Mindfulness, a form of meditation that helps you recognize and reflect on your emotions and physical sensations. Mindful Eating uses this practice to bring full attention to your internal cues of hunger, fullness, food cravings and emotions surrounding eating. The goal is to reflect on your emotions in a curious and non-judgmental way and to use your internal cues to guide your food choices and shape your eating habits towards meeting your diet and health goals.

Here are **ten tips** to start practicing Mindful Eating. Remember, it's called practice for a reason! Try to start following these tips at one meal each day. Increase the number of meals as you become more familiar and comfortable with the concepts.

01

Monitor your hunger levels

Throughout the day, check-in with your internal hunger cues. Imagine a scale ranging from 1, being starving to the point of fatigue, and 5 being neutral and comfortable. At the point of 4 and 3 you will start to feel signs of hunger like your stomach feels empty and it may be growling. This is your body telling you it is time to eat! Try not to let yourself dip below a level of 3 where your stomach feels painfully empty, or you feel light-headed. At this low end of the hunger scale, you are more likely to make food choices only driven by this intense hunger and it is more difficult to stick to your nutrition goals.

02

Plan ahead

The goal here is to have an idea of what you will eat and the foods you have available so that it is easier to make decisions when you become hungry. It takes time to prepare your meals or order food for delivery. Having a general plan in place and having food choices ready to go will help you to not go too low on the hunger scale.



03

Check-in with your fullness

During meals, check-in with your fullness. Imagine the hunger scale extending from 5, being neutral and comfortable to 10 being stuffed to the point of feeling nauseated. Stop eating after you feel full and satisfied, at a 6 or 7. It can be helpful to eat slowly, chew thoroughly, and take small bites to give your brain time to register the food.

04

Engage all your senses

When you are eating your meals, notice the flavors, textures and other properties of the food and focus on the satisfaction you are getting from the food and the emotions it evokes. Notice your own experience instead of going in with expectations on what you should experience.

05

Increase awareness of food choices

Become more aware of the types of foods you eat, how much you eat and how you feel afterwards. Calorie counting is not necessary. Instead, notice your internal cues to determine if a certain meal is filling and satisfying. Measuring portion sizes may be helpful in the beginning to determine what amount of food is right for you.

06

Don't assign a moral value to food

There are no "good foods" or "bad foods". Instead, think of foods as their components and what they offer your body. Different foods have different nutrient profiles. Eating a varied diet helps ensure we get all the nutrients our bodies need including enough of all 3 macronutrients: carbohydrate, protein and fat. Some foods may not offer your body a ton of healthful nutrients. They may instead offer you something else like pleasure or satisfaction - and that's okay! Enjoy these foods in moderation and use the mindful eating tactics you've learned to savor each delicious bite.



07

Think about adding not subtracting

Focus on what you can add to your diet to incorporate more healthy food choices rather than focusing on what you should give up. Mindful eating allows all foods to fit in a healthy diet. Be mindful about the reasons behind your food choices. Choose foods to give your body the nutrients and energy it needs, but also that taste good and are satisfying.

08

Acknowledge your emotions

Be curious and not judgmental when you ask yourself “why” you want to eat. You may be seeking out food because you are hungry or because you are sad, excited, or nervous. Think about your emotions with a neutral curiosity to understand why you want to eat and what you need in that moment.

09

Honor your cravings.

Food can be a source of great pleasure! Give yourself permission to eat the foods you really want and be okay with the fact that not all meals will be “perfect”. Mentally restricting yourself can lead to the same kinds of urges as true deprivation of food. Intentional restriction can backfire and lead to overeating or bingeing later.

10

Be kind to yourself

Eliminate negative self-talk and feelings of guilt about your food choices. Be gentle with yourself when you aren’t “perfect”. Behavior change is a conscious effort with long-term goals. There will be times you struggle to meet your goals and that is normal. Be patient and forgiving. The key is to not let one bad day - or week - make you feel like giving up.