



Mindful Eating

Superhighways, express lanes, instant messaging, fast food, instant credit, drive-through restaurants, and microwaves—perpetual motion is the modern way of life. We race from one task to the next, barely aware of what we are doing in the present—including eating.

Have you ever sat down with a bag of chips in front of the television and become so engrossed in what was going on that you only realized you were eating when your hand scraped the bottom of the bag? Would you know if the meal you were served were made from vegetables pulled right from the ground or from veggies frozen three years ago? Do you think about how your stomach feels before you eat and as you progress through a meal? All of these considerations are components of mindful eating, or being aware of your food and your body while you eat.

Mindful eating means eating with complete awareness. It involves being present in the moment.

Weight-loss surgery can help you learn how to increase your awareness while eating. It forces you to slow down, focus on chewing well, and recognize when your body tells you that you have had enough. Weight-loss surgery also encourages you to pay attention to your food choices. If you don't select high-protein foods, you will lose hair and feel weak. If you eat too much fat or sugar, you may get diarrhea.

Whether you are preparing for weight-loss surgery or preparing for lifelong weight management after weight-loss surgery, here are some tools for developing mindful eating skills.

Slowing Down

- Set a timer. Plan to take 30 minutes for a meal. Aim to eat half of your meal by the 15-minute mark.
- Chew each bite 20 to 25 times.
- Put your fork or spoon (or chopsticks) down between each bite.
- Eat with chopsticks or a baby spoon to get smaller bites.



Noticing Your Food

To notice your food, ask yourself:

- What are the colors of each food?
- What is the texture of each food?
- What are the smells?
- What does the food feel like in my mouth?
- How does the food taste? Salty? Bitter? Starchy? Rich?
- Which bite is most enjoyable?

Decreasing Distractions

- Eat in only one place at home and only one place at work (P.S., not your desk!).
- Turn off the television and talk radio.
- Close your eyes while you eat each bite to fully notice the taste, smell, and feel.
- Journal about any distressing thoughts before you sit down to eat. Set them aside after you have written them down.

Noticing Your Body

- How do you feel before you eat? How can you tell you are hungry? What sensations do you experience?
- Notice how you feel after each bite.
- How can you tell when you are full and satisfied?
- Before each bite, ask yourself, “Do I really want this next bite, or am I mindlessly eating it because it is in front of me?”

