

Practicing Mindful Eating

Mindful eating supports weight loss by promoting a conscious and intentional approach to eating, fostering a connection between mind and body⁽¹⁾. With that in mind, let's practice mindful eating.

So you don't overwhelm yourself, try one of the following actions each day and note down anything you observe. Has your pace changed, did you enjoy your meal more or less, how did your hunger and fullness signals change? Recognising these differences will help to understand the importance of mindful eating on your weight loss journey.

Slow Down: Take your time when you're eating. Chew your mouthful at least 20 times and put your knife and fork down each time you take a mouthful to aid digestion.

Eliminate Distractions: Sit at a table and make sure your phone and TV are off. Rather than staring at a screen during meal times, focus your attention on the food on your plate and the sensory experience of eating.

Use All Your Senses: Pay attention to the colours, textures, and smells of your food to enhance the enjoyment of each bite. As you chew your food, try to identify all the ingredients present in your meal - this could even be a game you play with your loved ones!

Listen to Your Body: Come to the table hungry, but not ravenous as this may promote eating quickly without a mindful approach to your meal. Focus on your body's hunger and fullness cues by eating when you're hungry and stopping when you're satisfied. This process can take time so have compassion for yourself. Your plate doesn't need to be empty and any food left can be saved as leftovers.

Practice Portion Control: Be mindful of portion sizes by using smaller plates to help control portions and prevent overeating. It's better to start with a small portion and grab a little more if you don't feel satisfied than giving yourself too much food, worrying about waste or eating too much.

Be Compassionate: Check-in with yourself before each meal. How are you feeling? Have your food choices been influenced by your emotions? Remember to avoid judgemental thoughts about your food choices. Approach each meal with a non-critical attitude, focusing on nourishment rather than guilt.

Practice Mindful Snacking: If you experience hunger between meals, remember that snacking is okay. Follow the same approach as you would during a meal, ensuring that you remain present whilst eating, avoid snacking on the go, and make choices that will leave you satiated which include fats, protein and fibre⁽²⁾.

1. Fuentes Ariles R *et al.* Mindful eating and common diet programs lower body weight similarly: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Obes Rev.* 2019 Nov;20(11):1619-1627. doi:10.1111/obr.12918.

2. NHS. (2023). Healthier snacks. NHS. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/healthier-snacks/#snack-tips>