

12 Healthy Habits

Habit 12: Be Mindful

A YEAR OF BUILDING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

BENEFITS:

- **Can help reduce the amount we eat by being more satisfied with smaller amounts**
- **May help with weight loss and/or maintenance**

GOAL:

- **Learn to appreciate every bite**

**Adapted from Cooking
Light Magazine**

Eat, Drink and Be Mindful

Eating should be a pleasurable experience in which we actively participate. It is an activity that is not only physical but should also be mental.

How often do we just shovel in our food and move on to the next meeting or event? Or do we watch television or read a magazine while reaching for handful after handful of a snack without really even tasting it?

When we are not mindful about what we are eating or we are stressed and thinking about other things we tend to overeat and to make poor decisions in what we eat. We end up eating whatever is there and convenient and feel guilty about it later.

Martha Beck, life coach and author, says it this way, "Never eat anything

you don't enjoy, and truly enjoy everything you eat." As we build healthy eating habits, we need to think about what we eat and why we eat it. We eat because we are hungry and because it brings people together to share. So take the time to enjoy your meals and be mindful of the taste and texture and enjoyment of what you are eating. Be mindful of what your body is telling you as far as hunger versus just mindless eating from boredom or stress. Be mindful of the people you are sharing food with and the enjoyment of that interaction.

We tend to be judgmental when we eat as well which causes us to be stressed, binge eat and not enjoy the foods we do eat. Foods are not inherently good or bad. A healthy lifestyle is

all about balance and choices. Balancing nutrient dense foods and physical activity with less nutrient dense foods. Think of it in terms of choices instead of words like "never", "bad" or "shouldn't." I am choosing this baked chicken with carrots because it tastes good. I am choosing this piece of cake because I worked out earlier.

If we approach our meals with intent and mindful choices, thinking about what we are eating and how much and appreciating each bite to create satisfaction, we can build a healthy eating pattern that is balanced and enjoyable.



Savor the Flavor

When you eat mindfully, you pay attention to the flavor and texture and smell of your foods. You look at the visual appearance of the plate. As you begin to eat more mindfully, think about the flavors and textures and savor each bite so that you can eat less with more satisfaction.

Taste/Flavor	Sweet, salty, bitter, sour, umami, spicy, bland, floral, savory, buttery, acidic, citrusy, earthy
Texture	Crispy, creamy, lumpy, soft, crunchy, chewy, fluffy, light, dense, jellied, tender
Temperature	Hot, cold, warm, frosty, steamy

Umami—The Fifth Taste

\ŭ-'mä-mē\ - a taste sensation that is pleasantly meaty or savory

We are all familiar with the four basic tastes of sweet, salty, bitter and sour. Now a fifth taste has been added with the Japanese name of Umami. It is found in foods like meat, mushrooms, soy sauce, seafoods and aged cheese and hams. It blends well with other tastes and rounds out the overall flavor.

How to Be Mindful

- Set realistic expectations. Select one meal or snack each day and commit to focusing on mindful eating for just that time.
- Eat only at the table. Minimize mindless eating by sitting and giving the meal your full attention. Do not eat while driving or working at your desk.
- Set aside time for eating without distractions. This means no cell phone, television, computer or newspaper.
- Use utensils and put them down between mouthfuls. By eating more slowly, you may notice the difference between satisfaction and being overly full.
- Keep appropriate serving sizes in mind and keep serving dishes off the dinner table. You will have to make a conscious choice to go back for more.
- Focus on each bite. Think about the flavor, texture, and sound of the food in your mouth.
- Aim for quality, not quantity. This will raise awareness of how much you eat while you learn to enjoy smaller portions. Skip the all-you-can-eat buffet for a few well chosen, well prepared, flavorful dishes.

Eat Breakfast

Get Cooking

Eat More Fish

Get Moving

Good Fats

Go Meatless

Veggie Up

Get Stronger

Sugar Down

Make Grains Whole

Portion Power

Be Mindful