

Mindful Eating

What is mindful eating?

- It's about purposeful eating.
- It's paying attention. Attention to all that surrounds you before, during and after eating. Do this without judgment.
- It's being aware of how food looks, smells, tastes, sounds and feels when you eat.
- It's **not** about restrictions or dieting!
- It's a **powerful tool** for building a healthier and happier relationship with food!

6 Ways to Practice Mindful Eating

Mindless Eating	Mindful Eating
1. Eating past full and ignoring your body's signals	Listening to your body and stopping when full
2. Eating when emotions tell us to eat (i.e. sad, bored, lonely)	Eating when our bodies tell us to eat i.e. stomach growling, energy low)
3. Eating alone, at random times and places	Eating with others, at set times and places
4. Eating foods that are emotionally comforting	Eating foods that are nutritionally healthy
5. Eating and multitasking	When eating, just eating
6. Consider a meal an end product	Considering where food comes from

Adapted from mindful.org

Six Ways to Practice Mindful Eating

1. Let your body catch up to your brain:

- Slow down and stop when your body says it's full.
- A 20 minute gap exists between the body and brain messaging "I'm full". This is why we often unconsciously overeat.
- Try sitting down to eat. Chew each bite 25 times or more. Set your fork down between bites.

Ask yourself: What are some ways I can slow down eating? How can I listen more deeply to my body's signals?

2. Know your body's personal hunger signals:

- We eat when our mind tells us. We use emotional signals like stress, sadness, frustration, loneliness or even just boredom.
- Listen to body signals for hunger. Stomach growling, low energy, or feeling a little lightheaded is true mindful eating.
- Know your body rhythm for eating. Be ready to eat when truly hungry.

Ask yourself: What are my body's hunger signals? What are my emotional hunger triggers?

3. Cultivate a mindful kitchen:

- Pay attention to eating at random times and places. Do you wander through cabinets? Do you eat every time you get in the car? This wires our brains for environmental cues that are not always ideal.
- Eat at consistent times and places. Sit down at a table, put food on a plate or bowl instead of eating it out of the container. Use utensils.
- Eat with others to slow down. Enjoy food and conversation. This helps prevent over or undereating out of emotion.
- Get organized and care for your kitchen space. Consider what you bring into your kitchen. Note where you put things away. You will eat what is there.

Ask yourself: Are healthy foods handy? What kinds of foods are in sight?

4) Understand your motivations:

- Slow down and eat healthier foods, like fruits and vegetables. You will enjoy them more than the story we tell ourselves about healthy foods.
- Many healthy foods are mentally and physically satisfying. Choosing them makes us less inclined to binge on comfort foods.

Ask yourself: Can I link the fresh smell, taste and texture to nutrients?
How will nutrients like fiber and vitamins energize me?

5) Attend to your plate:

- Multi-tasking and eating is a recipe for not being able to listen deeply to your body's needs and wants.
- Try single-tasking with your next meal and just eat. Avoid screens or distractions. Enjoy the company and conversation shared during the meal.
- Start with just one mindful practice. Slow down. Listen to your body. Do one thing at a time. Consider all that went into your meal on a more regular basis.
- Eventually you will bring more informal mindfulness to your daily meals. This changes the way you think and feel about food!

Ask yourself: What else was I doing when I ate my last meal or snack?

6) Connect more deeply with your food:

- A disconnect exists between food and where a meal comes from beyond the supermarket packaging. Eating offers an opportunity to connect more deeply to natural elements like water and soil that created food.
- Reflect on cultural traditions, farming operations and recipes shared for food.
- Mindfulness like this enables wiser choices about sustainability and health in our food. This applies not just for us but for the whole planet.

Ask yourself: How many hands have touched this food from farm to table?

For more information: smgh.ca/patient-care-programs/regional-cardiac-care-centre/cardiac-rehabilitation/