

## Mindful Eating

Your health depends on how you eat. The ability of your body to easily use the food you eat is affected by: where you are, your state of mind, the speed at which you eat, and how much you pay attention to the process of eating.

### What is mindful eating?

- Your body knows what and how much to eat to in order to stay healthy, maintain a healthy weight and provide for all it needs to run smoothly and efficiently.
- Your body is constantly sending you signals telling you when it needs energy, when it has enough fuel, and what nutrients it needs. Most of us have lost the ability to hear and respond appropriately to these signals, resulting in a frustrating and disappointing relationship to food.
- Mindful eating is about relearning how to listen to these cues and to rebuild a sense of trust in your body. It is about making peace with food.
- Mindful eating is allowing yourself to become aware of the positive and nurturing opportunities that are available through making and eating food and by respecting your own inner wisdom.
- Mindful eating is noticing your response to food (likes and dislikes) without judgment.
- Mindful eating is choosing to eat food that is both pleasing to you and nourishing to your body by using all your senses to explore, savor and taste.
- Mindful eating is learning to be aware of physical hunger and satiety cues to guide your decision to begin eating and to stop eating.



### What is not mindful eating?

- Eating while driving, watching TV, etc.
- When you eat because of feelings (sad, happy, frustrated, bored, anxious, and excited).
- If you eat when you are not hungry or when you are already full (satiated).
- When you associate eating or your food choices with shame or guilt.

## Ways to increase mindful eating

### Food journaling

Write down:

1. What you eat
2. When you eat
3. Where you eat
4. Why you eat

Other things to be aware of and document:

- Look for patterns in your eating.
- Ask yourself, "How can I increase my mindful eating practices?" Write down what comes up.
- Notice emotions that are behind your reasons for eating, other than hunger and fullness.
- Notice how your body is feeling before, during, and after a meal or snack.
- Notice your energy level throughout the day.

Focus on where and how you eat:

- For a week, eat all your meals sitting at a table.
- Put away distractions like electronics, bills, magazines and TV.
- Pay attention to how long you chew your food.
- Chew thoroughly.
- Practice paying attention to the flavor of your food and savoring every bite.
- Slow down and listen to your body throughout each meal.

Sample food journal

<i>What I ate</i>	<i>Where I ate</i>	<i>When I ate</i>	<i>Why I ate</i>
<i>Yogurt</i>	<i>Home, while getting ready for work</i>	<i>6 am</i>	<i>I know it is important to eat breakfast</i>
<i>Sandwich</i>	<i>Work, in front of computer</i>	<i>11:30 am</i>	<i>Hungry</i>
<i>Candy</i>	<i>Work</i>	<i>12:30 pm</i>	<i>Frustrated about something at work</i>
<i>Apple</i>	<i>Work</i>	<i>2:30 pm</i>	<i>Hungry</i>
<i>Nuts</i>	<i>On the way home from work</i>	<i>5:30 pm</i>	<i>They were in my car - a reward after a long day at work</i>
<i>Crackers and cheese</i>	<i>Home, standing in the kitchen talking</i>	<i>6:30 pm</i>	<i>Social - relaxation</i>
<i>Fish, rice, vegetables</i>	<i>Home, in front of TV</i>	<i>7:30 pm</i>	<i>Dinner was ready</i>

### **Reconnect with your hunger and fullness cues**

- Your body has a smart system of signals designed to let you know how hungry you are. Start to listen.
- Each time you eat, ask: “Am I hungry?”, “How hungry am I?”
- Rank your hunger on a scale of 1-10 (1 = too hungry, 10 = too full). Then, try and make sure to eat something before you get to 1 and stop eating before you get to 10.
- If it’s hard to identify ask: “When was the last time I ever felt hungry?”, “How did my stomach/body/mouth feel?”
- To prevent feeling overly hungry, a general guideline is to go no more than 5 waking hours without eating.

### **Resources**

- Intuitive Eating by Evelyn Tribole, MS, RD & Elyse Resch, MS, RD, FA, DA
- Nourishing Wisdom by Marc David
- The Slow Down Diet by Marc David
- The Center for Mindful Eating at: [www.tcme.org](http://www.tcme.org)

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This education resource was intended to be given as part of a nutrition consult by an SCCA registered dietitian.  
Questions? Ask an SCCA dietitian at [nutrition@seattlecca.org](mailto:nutrition@seattlecca.org).