

We often eat while on the run or doing other things such as driving, working, or watching television. Multi-tasking while you eat often leads to eating mindlessly. Have you ever eaten an entire bag of popcorn during a movie and not realized it until the end? Or, have you come home from a party completely stuffed and didn't remember what you ate to make you feel so full?

Mindless eating can have negative consequences on your health. Over time, it can lead to overeating, excessive weight gain, and digestive issues, such as gas and bloating. Remember, mindful eating is healthful eating!

Here are some tips to help you slow down while eating:

- Put your utensils down between bites
- Sip water between bites
- Chew your food thoroughly before swallowing (this helps improve digestion)
- Try eating with chopsticks
- Set a timer to see if you can extend your meal for 20 minutes. You may find you don't need second helpings (it takes about 20 min. for our belly to tell our brain that we are full)
- Eat without a TV, phone, or computer in front of you. No distractions!
- Eat at the dinner table

Additional Tips:

- **Protect the home environment:** Remove temptations by keeping them out of the house. Instead, keep the kitchen stocked with healthy foods like fruit, vegetables, whole grains (like quinoa and oatmeal), lean protein (like chicken, fish, and tofu) and dairy products or dairy alternatives (like unsweetened soy or almond milk).
- **Remember to portion control:** Stick to the balanced plate which encourages you to fill ½ your plate with non-starchy vegetables, ¼ lean protein (size of your palm/deck of cards), and ¼ starches or grains (size of your fist)
- **Think before you drink:** Drink water or milk instead of soda, juice, lemonade, ice tea, etc. These are loaded with added sugar and empty calories
- **STOP, TAKE A DEEP BREATH, and THINK** before reaching for something unhealthy. Do you really want it because you're hungry or do you want it because you're stressed? Here's a list of activities (other than eating) to try to avoid emotional eating:
 - Take a hot bath
 - Go for a walk around the neighborhood or at a local park
 - Call a close friend or family member ... sometimes it helps to vent
 - Watch a favorite movie
 - Read a book, magazine
 - Treat yourself to a manicure, pedicure and/or a massage
 - Listen to classical music ... some studies have shown it helps lower blood pressure
 - Write in a journal