



# Mindful Eating

Think back to when you were a child. Were you ever told to “clean your plate”? Many of us are so used to the idea that we must eat everything served, that we become disconnected from how our bodies are feeling. We may no longer even know if we are hungry or not.

## What is mindful eating?

“Mindful eating” means that you are aware while you are eating. It involves paying attention to hunger cues, tastes, textures, and colors, and generally being in tune with your food. It is important to avoid distractions (such as TV or computer) during mealtime and to eat slowly to be able to truly listen to what your body is feeling.

It takes 20 minutes for our brains to “catch up” to our stomachs. Often we eat so fast that we overeat before we realize that we are full. That means if we eat more slowly, we have a better chance of eating to satisfaction rather than to the point of being overly full. We can also increase our satisfaction with foods if we eat them slowly and mindfully.

## Hunger and Fullness

One strategy to eat more mindfully is to use the *Hunger Scale*, which describes your hunger level as a number between 1 and 10. 1 represents the point of hunger where you are starving and want to eat everything in sight and 10 represents when you feel uncomfortably full. The goal with the hunger scale is to try to learn to recognize when you are at a 3 or 4 (slightly hungry, not ravenous) and begin eating then. When you are eating, try to eat until you are at a 7 or 8 (satisfied and content).

Try using the *Hunger Scale* with each of your meals for one week. Writing down the number before you start eating and when you finish may help you to relearn your bodies hunger and fullness cues.

## The Hunger Scale

I'm starving and light headed	My stomach feels very empty and is growling	My stomach feels empty	I am starting to feel hungry	I don't feel hungry or full	I am slightly satisfied	I feel almost satisfied	I feel satisfied and content	I feel too full	I ate way too much and I don't feel so well
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

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