



Mindful Eating

Taking just 30 minutes away from work to practice mindful eating can reduce your stress levels. Mindful eating allows you to focus intently on your food and not worry about what is going on at work or home. It forces us to be in the present and appreciate what we are doing now. Stress causes many people to overeat and feel overly full after each meal, which can lead to discomfort and more stress. Mindful eating is a great way to relax, unwind and de-stress.

We can eat well throughout the day by *paying attention* to cues that we are hungry or satiated. When it's time to eat, we can set aside other tasks to focus on enjoying a good meal. For a good rule of thumb, follow the 3 S's: Slow down, Savor each flavor, and Stop when you no longer feel hungry.

https://ufhealth.org/sites/default/files/media/Integrative-Medicine/ITM_WELL_series_Eating.pdf

Tips for mindful eating

- Before eating, take a few deep breaths and clear your mind. Notice your hunger level and decide if you are physiologically hungry or is it mental. Then decide how full you want to be after the meal.
- Take away distractions. Sit alone, away from work, the television, and computers. If you have to eat at your desk, turn off your computer and put your work to the side.
- Pay attention to your environment. Do you eat in a stressful environment? Stress can cause people to overeat, so be weary of your surroundings and try to make it as peaceful as possible.
- Be nonjudgmental. Mindful eating is not about restricting your diet or feeling bad about what you eat, it's about noticing your food and being present while appreciating what you're eating.
- Pay attention to each bite. Put your fork down after you put food in your mouth and notice the different flavors, smells, colors, and textures you are eating. Your food will be there once you're done chewing, no need to rush.
- Take time to notice your hunger level. It takes your brain about 20 minutes to register that you are full, which makes it very easy to over eat. Consider taking a "speed bump" in the middle of your meal to stop and ask yourself how hungry you are.



Eating and Stress

Stress has a very strong relationship with food: our stress levels can impact our nutrition choices and our nutrition choices can impact our stress levels.

Chronic stress leads to an over production of stress hormones, including cortisol, which can decrease metabolism, impact your body's insulin response, upset your digestive system, and lead to weight gain. Not providing your body with the fuel it needs to make it through the day can impact your mood, productivity, and energy levels.

Eating processed foods high in fat, sodium, and sugar puts additional stress on our bodies.

About 90% of all doctor office visits are due to stress-related ailments or complaints.

-CDC

There's no such thing as a "stress free" diet, but certain foods can help your body function better.

- **Water.** Water is key for supporting the immune system, brain processing in stressful situations, and handling emotions.
- **Antioxidants.** Antioxidants prevent cell oxidation which may lead to cancer, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, Parkinson's disease and other conditions.

Foods that contain antioxidants include fruits, vegetables, certain herbs and spices, coffee, tea, cocoa, and soy. To get more antioxidants in your diet, aim to "eat the rainbow" by incorporating a variety of brightly colored foods.

- **Omega-3.** Omega-3s are polyunsaturated, essential fats meaning your body does not produce them and therefore they must be consumed. Omega-3s are important in brain development, reducing inflammation, and increasing HDL cholesterol, the "good" cholesterol.

Foods that contain omega-3s are marine and plant life, such as walnuts, flax seeds, fatty fish like tuna, salmon, and rainbow trout.

Derived from *Stress Less and Thrive*, Florida Blue