



Habits for life: Mindful Eating

What is mindfulness?

It can be easy to rush through life without stopping to notice much. Mindfulness is a way of paying more attention to the present moment and taking notice of the world around us. Mindfulness can help us enjoy life more and understand ourselves and our emotions better.



What is mindful eating?

Mindful eating is an approach to food that focuses on being fully present while we eat. This means giving over all our attention to the food as well as our thoughts, senses and feelings during and after we eat.

Why be more mindful when eating?

Mindful eating opens up an opportunity to appreciate food more and make a better connection with it. This can help support emotional eating and binge eating, whilst promoting a healthier relationship with food.

Eating mindfully may also help regulate our appetite, aid digestion and make eating a more pleasurable and enjoyable experience. It is not about restricting yourself, though some people may find that eating more mindfully will lead to weight loss without any expectation or intention to do so.

How can I eat more mindfully?

Slow down when eating – Chew your food well and take time to pause while you're eating by putting your cutlery down between each mouthful. This leads to a more relaxed eating experience. Slow eating allows your body to recognise when it's full because when your stomach has taken

enough food, a hormone called leptin is released from fat tissues which sends signals to the brain of fullness. It is thought that it takes around 20 minutes for this process to occur so slow eating gives time and opportunity for your brain to work this out!



Avoid distractions – Try not to eat while you're on your laptop, phone, reading or watching TV so that you can relax and enjoy your food in the moment.

Listen to your body – Think about what your body feels like when you are hungry. When you eat start with the amount of food you think will make you feel comfortably full. Try to avoid feeling extremely full. Remember you can always eat more if you still feel hungry.

Take a look at our Hunger Scale Factsheet.

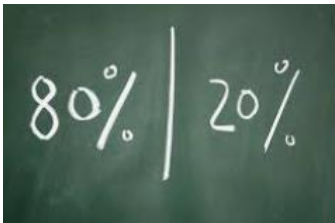
Consider your thoughts and feelings as sometimes our emotions can trigger hunger. Our **Emotional Eating Factsheet** has tips on how to recognise and support this

Plan ahead and stick to regular meal times – Make a plan of your meals and snacks for the week and try to eat at regular times throughout the day. This will help to regulate your levels of hunger and avoid those times when you feel starving as eating behaviours and food choices may not be as good.

Enjoy each mouthful – with each mouthful take time to recognise the smell, flavour, taste and texture of your food. This will help you enjoy the eating experience and feel satisfied.

Eat food for fuel and nourishment – Choose nutritious foods that are satisfying to you, that give you energy and are nourishing to your body.

Avoid labelling foods – All types of food can play a part in a healthy and varied diet. Instead of focusing on what foods are “good” or “bad”, focus on achieving a variety of different foods that provide satisfaction, enjoyment and nourishment. Try the 80/20 approach.



N.B. Mindful eating may not be suitable for those with an active eating disorder.

Mindful eating can lead to the justification of undereating and can be harmful to those recovering from eating disorders and disordered eating. Please discuss any concerns with your GP or health professional.

References:

Mindful Eating Food Factsheet - <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/mindful-eating.html>

The Do's and Don'ts of Mindful Eating - <https://www.weightwatchers.com/uk/food/habits/mindful-eating/dos-and-donts-mindful-eating>

Mindful Eating – Change your relationship to food forever - <https://www.nhs.uk/services/service-directory/mindful-eating:-change-your-relationship-to-food-forever/N10447471>