What’s the deal with mindful eating?

How many times do we find ourselves sitting, zoned out, in front of the TV with our hand going in and out of a bag of chips, seemingly on its own? Have you ever prepared a wonderful meal to sit down and eat it so fast you don’t even remember that it happened? By practicing mindful eating, you can learn to savor every bite, focus on the taste and texture of your food, and become aware of your own eating habits. Mindful eating focuses on how you eat, and not what you can and cannot eat. Benefits of mindful eating include a regained sense of hunger and fullness, weight loss or maintenance, increased self-esteem, and a sense of empowerment.

Practicing mindful eating is quite simple! Follow these tips to become more mindful:

- Eat away from distractions like the television and computers, instead, put on soft, slow music.
- Recognize when you may slip into mindless eating.
- Eat slowly, taking breaks during bites and chewing more.
- Utilize all of your senses to fully appreciate the food.
- Envision the food nourishing your body as you eat.
- Taste each bite before reaching for the next.
- Become aware of feelings of hunger and fullness—eat when you’re hungry and stop when you’re full, avoiding emotional eating.
- Acknowledge your body’s response to food, such as positive, negative, and neutral.
- Be non-judgmental of yourself and your body if you accidentally overeat.

To gain experience eating...
Mindful—Cont’d from Pg 1

mindfully, try this exercise:
Take a piece of dried fruit, such as a cherry or raisin. Hold it in your hand and feel its texture, close your eyes and bring it up to your nose and smell it. How does it smell to you? Is it appetizing? Place the piece of fruit in your mouth, close your eyes, and let it sit on your tongue. Notice how it feels in your mouth. Begin chewing slowly, noting how long you chew it for, the mouthfeel of the fruit, and different flavors you experience throughout different taste buds. Be aware of any feelings associated with the food—being positive, negative, or neutral. Swallow the food once you have chewed it entirely. Do you desire more, or was the sensory experience fulfilling on its own? Next, try this exercise with a piece of highly processed food (such as chips, Cheetos, a candy bar, etc.). Pay attention to the flavors and textures while eating the processed food.

Cardio—Cont’d from Pg 1

Cardiovascular training should never be the dreaded exercise. Instead, try to make it fun and enjoyable! Examples of cardio exercises include: jogging, running, walking, biking, and swimming. If those are not of interest to you, there are many aerobic-type classes such as step aerobics, aqua aerobics, Zumba and many more! Today is the day to take control of your body and start moving!

“One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well”
-Virginia Wolf

Mindful Eating Cycle

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Tips for Eating Healthy When Eating Out

- As a beverage choice, ask for water or order fat-free or low-fat milk, unsweetened tea, or other drinks without added sugars.
- Ask for whole-wheat bread for sandwiches.
- In a restaurant, start your meal with a salad packed with veggies, to help control hunger and feel satisfied sooner.
- Ask for salad dressing to be served on the side. Then use only as much as you want.
- Choose main dishes that include vegetables, such as stir fries, kebobs, or pasta with a tomato sauce.
- Order steamed, grilled, or broiled dishes instead of those that are fried or sautéed.
- Choose a small" or "medium" portion. This includes main dishes, side dishes, and beverages.
- Order an item from the menu instead heading for the "all-you-can-eat" buffet.
- If main portions at a restaurant are larger than you want, try one of these strategies to keep from overeating:
  - Order an appetizer-sized portion or a side dish instead of an entrée.
  - Share a main dish with a friend.
  - If you can chill the extra food right away, take leftovers home in a "doggy bag."
  - When your food is delivered, set aside or pack half of it to go immediately.
  - Resign from the "clean your plate club" - when you've eaten enough, leave the rest.
- To keep your meal moderate in calories, fat, and sugars:
  - Order foods that do not have creamy sauces or gravies
  - Add little or no butter to your food.
  - Choose fruits for dessert most often.

On long commutes or shopping trips, pack some fresh fruit, cut-up vegetables, low-fat string cheese sticks, or a handful of unsalted nuts to help you avoid stopping for sweet or fatty snacks.

From [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

Check the website for many more helpful tips for healthy eating!
Mediterranean Couscous Salad with Chickpeas

recommended by the American Heart Association

Ingredients

- 1 1/4 cups water
- 1 cup whole-wheat couscous
- 2 medium cucumbers
- 1 1/2 cups grapes, halved
- 3 green onions
- 15.5 oz. canned chickpeas (aka garbanzo beans), low-sodium, drained, rinsed
- 1/3 cup chopped black or Kalamata olives
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 1/2 T olive or canola oil
- 1 T lemon juice
- 4 T feta cheese crumbles

Cooking Instructions

- Using the microwave or a teapot, bring 1 ¼ cups water to a boil. Add into a medium-sized heatproof container, along with couscous. Stir together and cover with a lid or very tightly with plastic wrap. Let couscous sit for 10 minutes.

- Meanwhile, peel cucumbers. Quarter each cucumber and then cut into 1-inch chunks. Add into a large bowl. If desired, halve the grapes or add them whole into the bowl. Chop the scallions, about ¼ cup, and add into the bowl.

When couscous is finished, use a fork to fluff it and then add into the bowl along with the olives, chickpeas, parsley, oil, and lemon juice. Use a large spoon or spatula to stir to combine. Serve, topping each portion with 1 tablespoon feta cheese.

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/Recipes/Mediterranean-Couscous-Salad-with-Chickpeas_UCM_468653_RecipeDetail.jsp — nutritional information on this dish can be found here

Blue Banana Smoothie

Ingredients

- 8 ounces milk (use your favorite such as fat-free, low-fat, reduced-fat, almond, soy)
- ½ cup frozen banana slices
- ½ cup frozen blueberries

Directions

In blender, puree everything until smooth. Serve immediately.

The frozen fruit gives the smoothie a thick texture. Add water if you want a thinner consistency or add ice if you want it even thicker.

Add "smoothie boosts" such as fresh baby spinach (1 cup), plain low-fat yogurt (¼ cup), oatmeal (¼ cup), ground flaxseeds (1 to 2 tablespoons), unsweetened cocoa powder (1 tablespoon), honey (to taste) or cinnamon (to taste).

Nutrition Information

Serving size: 1 smoothie
Serves 1

Calories: 190; Total Fat: 1g; Saturated Fat: 0g; Trans Fat: 0g; Cholesterol: 5mg; Sodium: 105mg; Total Carbohydrate: 38g; Dietary Fiber: 4g; Sugars: 27g; Protein: 10g.