

Department of
NUTRITION & DIETETICS

Mindful Eating



Understanding Mindful Eating

- Eating is a pleasurable experience. Mindful eating can help you gain control of your eating habits. Research has shown that it can promote weight loss and reduce binge eating.
- Common reasons for eating when you are not feeling hungry :
 - Stress
 - Feelings of emptiness or boredom
 - Social influences (such as gatherings, parties, festive occasions)
 - Due to emotions (such as anger, fear, sadness, anxiety, resentment, loneliness and shame)
 - Environmental (readily available food/snacks around)
- Difference between emotional and physical hunger:

Emotional Hunger	Physical Hunger
Comes on suddenly, unrelated to timing of meals/snacks	Comes on gradually, after a few hours after a meal
Feel it in the head	Feel it in the stomach (e.g. Stomach growling)
Feels like it needs to be satisfied	Can wait
Craves specific food	Open to options – lots of food sound good
Doesn't go away after eating	Goes away when full after eating
Triggers feelings of guilt, powerlessness and shame	Satisfy physical hunger and does not make you feel bad about yourself

Understanding Hunger

Mindful eating means paying full attention to your food when eating. Here are some tips to help you cultivate mindful eating habits:

- Avoid multi-tasking when eating (e.g. using your phone or watching television).
- Be aware and present when you eat
- Take 3 deep breaths before starting the meal
- Be conscious of your body sensations when eating (e.g. the taste of the food).
- Understand your hunger levels. Eat only when you are hungry and stop eating when you are full.
- Pay attention to your food and allow more time for the feeling of fullness to reach your brain.
- Notice how each mouthful is using your senses (taste, texture, aroma, crunch, after taste, etc.)
- Be intentional about each bite (each because you are hungry, not just because there is food).

Understanding Mindful Eating

Tips for During Meals/Snack Time

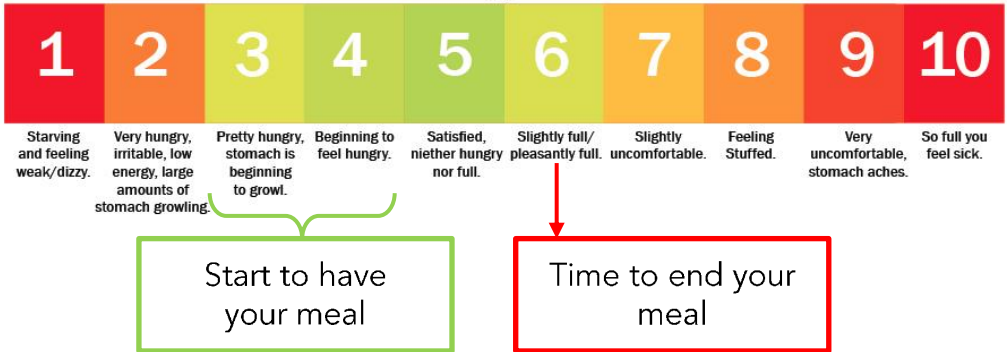
Ensure that your eating environment is free from distractions. Drink some water and notice three things in your surroundings.

1. Take 3 deep breaths to prepare yourself before you begin eating.
2. Ask yourself how hungry you are (use "The Hunger Scale" on next page). Notice what is on your plate before you start eating. Pay attention to the smell, texture, appearance and amount of food on your plate.
3. Chew 30 times per mouthful until your food becomes soft and smooth. Put down your cutlery after each mouthful to taste each bite. Ask yourself if you like the taste, texture and flavour of the food. Do these change while you are chewing? Pay attention to any emotions and thoughts that come to your mind while you are eating.
4. Regularly track your hunger. Only take the next spoonful of food after you have finished chewing and swallowing.

Understanding Mindful Eating

Tips for During Meals/Snack Time

The Hunger Scale



- Avoid pressuring yourself to finish your food when you reach a score of 8 on the Hunger Scale. Have your meal before you reach a score of 2 on the Hunger Scale.
- Learn to recognise physical hunger cues (e.g. stomach growling, growing sensation of hunger).

Tips for During Meals/Snack Time

- Avoid eating out of large packages or containers. Portion out the amount you intend to have.
- Eliminate distractions. Focus on the taste, texture, smell and appearance of each bite. Chew well and enjoy your food.
- Avoid eating out of boredom, stress, anger, depression, and/or anxiety.

Reference:

1. McConnell, G. (2016). *Hunger Scale to help control hunger and prevent overeating*. [online] Inside Out Nutrition. Available at: <https://insideoutnutrition.ie/hunger-scale-to-control-hunger/>.

Understanding Mindful Eating

Reasons For Eating	How to Overcome it
Boredom / Non-hungry / Emotional / Stress Eating	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Use the Hunger Scale to determine how hungry you are before eating. Consider if your next action will bring you closer to or further away from your diet/weight goal. Alternatively, consider if there is anything else you can do to keep yourself on track in achieving your diet/weight goal .2. Keep your home or working environment free from snacks.3. Engage in relaxing activities (e.g. watching television, talking to a friend, heading out for some fresh air).4. Identify what triggers your reasons for eating and plan how to avoid them.
Head Hunger (Cravings) / Environmental Factors	<p>Remember: food cravings tend to go away within 15-30 minutes without doing anything. Learn to accept the feeling and remember that you always have a choice to eat or not.</p> <p>You can take your mind off food-by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Drinking a glass of water and waiting 20 minutes to see if you still want to eat2. Doing other activities you enjoy.3. Taking five long, deep breaths.

Mindful Eating Journal

Food journaling can be useful when you are practising mindful eating. It helps you remember what you have eaten and if you ate too much or too little. It also helps you realise if you are eating out of boredom rather than hunger.

Date/ Time	What I Consumed	Hunger Scale (From 1 - 10)		My Thoughts/ Feelings	What was I Doing
		Before Eating	After Eating		

The Hunger Scale



Mindful Eating Journal

Date/ Time	What I Consumed	Hunger Scale (From 1 - 10)		My Thoughts/ Feelings	What was I Doing
		Before Eating	After Eating		

The Hunger Scale



Clinics B2
TTSH Medical Centre, Level B2
Contact:
6256 6011 (General Enquiries)



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