

# Eat Healthy

## Chapter 2

# Mindful Eating and Intuitive Eating

### You Will Learn About:

1. Mindfulness
  - a. What it means to eat mindfully
2. Intuitive eating
  - a. What it means to be an intuitive eater
3. How mindful and intuitive eating can help you manage your diabetes

#### 1. What Does It Mean To Be Mindful?

Being mindful is when you focus on the present moment without judgment ([www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)).

##### What does mindful eating mean?

Mindful eating is when you take notice of all that surrounds you before, during and after a meal. Mindful eating involves using all of your senses (sight, smell, sound, taste and touch) when you eat.

Eating this way allows you to look at food in a new way. For example, try asking yourself the questions below:

- When was the last time you noticed what your food looks like? Are you used to being on 'automatic pilot' (eating your food really fast without thinking, noticing or tasting it)?
- Do you notice how your food smells?
- Do you listen to sounds, like crunching?
- How often do you take the time to taste your food, notice the textures and savour the flavours?
- Do you notice how food feels when you are cooking or baking it?
- Do you notice how food feels while you are eating it?

Mindful eating is not something most people can do all of the time. But, you can plan to practice mindful eating some of the time. At these moments, allow yourself to enjoy eating with nothing else on your mind. Try to make mindful eating a habit. This habit can lead to a better feeling about the role of food in your life.

Mindful eating is not the same as ‘restrictive’ eating. Restrictive eating is when you try to control food to:

- Help you eat less
- Solve the problem of eating when you feel a certain way (emotional eating)
- Avoid food cravings

Mindful eating is not a way to have control over your food. Recall that being mindful is about being in the moment, without judgment. It means you are aware of your thoughts, feelings and actions around food because you are fully present. You make a choice to eat what food is before you, free of guilt and judgment.

## 2. What Is Intuitive Eating?

The word “intuitive” is a feeling you have that is based on what you sense to be true. Intuitive eating is your innate sense of what is right or wrong for your body.

Intuitive eating is:

- Eating in response to what you feel inside your body. Eating when you are hungry and stopping when you have had enough (not too much)
- Being aware of your likes and dislikes of certain foods and eating foods that feel right to you. Being aware allows you to get more pleasure when you eat

When you practice intuitive eating, you will start to notice how certain foods make you feel. If a certain food makes you feel bloated you may choose not to eat that food again. For example, someone who is lactose intolerant can recall how dairy products make them feel after eating. They can then make a choice to eat food with dairy or not.

Notice how you feel when you eat to learn how your body responds to certain foods. You can help yourself feel better by asking yourself two questions:

1. "Am I hungry?" 
2. "What am I feeling?"



Sad



Bored



Angry



Lonely

Does the way you feel trigger the need to eat? Being aware of what is causing you to want to eat can help you learn why you eat. It is o.k. to feel what you feel. Try not to judge your feelings. Instead, accept what happens and make a choice. Choose to eat or not to eat. If you choose to eat, then eat and be mindful. Do not judge yourself.

### How to be an intuitive eater?

It takes time and practice to become an intuitive eater. Follow these steps to help you become an intuitive eater:

1. **Say 'goodbye' to food rules or diets.** Shift your focus away from food rules or diets that tell you what and how much you should eat.

When you are an intuitive eater, you decide what to eat and how much to eat. You can make these choices based on how you feel at that moment and how you want to feel in your body later.

2. **Notice your body signals.** Notice when you start to feel hungry. Learn how hunger feels to you.

Some people feel hunger when their stomach feels empty. Some people feel hunger when they start to get a headache or their mood changes. Some people feel low in energy, shaky or sweaty.

3. **Use the ‘Hunger Scale’.** Rate your hunger on a scale of 1 to 10 before you eat a meal. The lower the number, the more hungry you are. You can use the Hunger Scale again to notice how you feel after you eat.

**1** ..... **10**  
**Very Hungry** ..... **Not at all Hungry**

4. Choose healthy foods that are good for your body. Think about what foods make you feel healthy and good. When you choose foods that you enjoy and support your body, you will feel well and feel better about food.

### **3. How Can Mindful and Intuitive Eating Help You Manage Diabetes?**

Mindful and intuitive eating can help you manage your diabetes. Notice how you feel in body and mind before and after eating. Check your blood sugar at different times to learn more about how your body responds based on how you feel and what you do.

For example:

- Check your blood sugar when you feel hungry to learn about yourself. Your blood sugar may or may not be low
- Check your blood sugar 2 hours after a meal to learn how your body responds to the type and amount of foods you ate