

The Power of “Conscious Eating”

Conscious eating is a weight management approach that just might change your life. It's based on the notion that your body has an inner intelligence—it “knows” what you need to be healthy. For instance, it knows how, when and what you should eat. All you need to do is learn to pay attention. Here's how:

Just Eat

When was the last time you sat down to a meal or snack and just ate—no book, no TV, no crossword puzzle as you gulped down your sandwich? In our hurry-up society we try to cram as many activities as possible into each hour. It's called getting the most out of life, but what it really means is we lose the pleasure of eating. It's no wonder that you're still unsatisfied when you finish

eating. Try focusing on your food as you eat, paying attention to the taste and texture and your sense of being filled by the food you eat. Notice your body's signal that it's had enough to eat. Before you eat, notice how it feels to be hungry.

Break the Routine

It's hard to become conscious when you repeat the same old boring routine every day. Try a change: Eat with chopsticks, eat with your other hand or use your fingers. Even if you're eating alone, make eating an event. Set an attractive table with candles, your best china and silverware. Turn off the TV or radio. Arrange the food on your plate as though for a guest. Then savor each bite as you slowly eat it.

Slow Down

When you eat slowly you don't eat as much. That's because most people don't stop eating until they feel full, and no matter how much you eat, you won't feel full for at least 20 minutes after you start. Make your meal at least a half hour long. Try putting your fork down after each bite, consciously chewing and swallowing each bite before taking the next or start your meal by lingering over a low-calorie appetizer. Taking a sip of water between bites can help you slow down as well.

Paying Attention Pays off

You may find yourself resisting conscious eating at first, especially if you've had lifelong weight issues. But with practice, it becomes more and more rewarding. Sooner or later, you'll notice that you're eating less and enjoying it more.

