

A Brief Guide to Mindful Eating Benefits

Lifestyles, cultural foods, and diets all focus on the amount and choices of food that create habits and regimen. When we eat with only weight loss in sight, or we eat based on math such as counting calories instead of satiety; we lose consciousness of what our bodies *actually* need and want.

Mindful eating means slowing down and paying attention to:

- What you're eating: the taste, temperature, texture
- Whether you feel full or hungry
- The process of chewing and swallowing
- How your food looks: the color and portion size
- When and how often you're eating

We don't often link food to meditation, but by applying mindfulness meditation techniques to the experience of eating, we can reap major benefits. Benjamin Decker lists these benefits of practicing mindful eating in his book *Practical Meditation for Beginners*.

1. **Awareness of how much you need to eat.** Eating mindfully can help you avoid eating too much—or too little. Your body naturally sends fullness and hunger signals to your brain, but eating distractedly, dieting, and regularly eating larger portions than your body needs can obscure those signals. Mindful eating plugs you back into your body's cues, so you know when to stop and start eating. This naturally means you eat less.
2. **Awareness of why you are eating.** Ever found yourself in the kitchen late at night, making your way through a bag of chips or a tub of ice cream, only to realize you have no idea why you're eating in the first place? When you're mindful about your eating habits, you're less likely to engage in binge-eating and emotional eating.
3. **Greater meal satisfaction.** Paying attention to what you're eating can make your meal more enjoyable. Mindful eating means engaging all your senses and really taking pleasure in the food you're eating.
4. **Better diet-related health.** In a study of adults with Type 2 diabetes, eating mindfully was just as likely to result in positive health effects, such as weight loss and lower blood sugar levels. , Mindful eating is associated with lower blood glucose and weight stabilization, resulting in better long-term health outcomes.
5. **Increased mindful attention skills.** As with all forms of meditation, mindful eating allows you to focus your attention, present-moment awareness, and recognition of and mastery over the wandering mind.
6. **Better eating choices.** Habits take away choice. Mindful eating helps you override automatic behaviors and allows you to really think about what you are eating, and why, and then make more healthful and satisfying choices.
7. **Improved digestion and nutrient absorption.** Your digestive system involves a complex interplay between hormone signals and your nervous system. When you're full, it takes about 20 minutes for those signals to register in the brain. Eating slowly and chewing thoroughly lets your body focus on digestion, helps you stop when you're full, and allows more nutrients to reach your body.