

**Mindful Eating: The  
key to weight loss?**

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## Mindful Eating: The key to weight loss?

If you struggle with your weight or with overeating, you've probably experienced the frustration of trying to stick to your latest eating plan, only to fall off the wagon again and return to your old habits of eating too much or the "wrong" foods. Or, if you manage your weight through dieting or other restrictive eating methods, you may have developed rigid rules around food that consume a lot of time and mental energy. If either of these descriptions sound familiar, it's likely that you could benefit from adopting the concept of *mindfulness*.

Simply stated, mindfulness means paying attention to what is going on around us and within us, non-judgmentally. Mindfulness has been linked to greater quality of life in many ways, including reductions in stress and anxiety, improved health and freedom from unwanted habits. By adopting a more mindful attitude about food and eating, you can:

- Learn how to differentiate true hunger from other triggers like emotions
- Discover how to use hunger as your guide to know when and how much to eat
- Get more pleasure from less food
- Put an end to dieting, overeating and "yo-yo" eating patterns

When you think of eating mindfully, you may envision things like eating slowly, chewing thoroughly and savoring the food. These are indeed a part of mindfulness, but you can extend the concept further to your relationship with food by paying attention to your thoughts and behaviors before, during and after eating.

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## To cultivate a more mindful relationship with food, begin asking yourself the following questions:

**WHY?** Why are you experiencing a desire to eat? Is it because your body needs fuel? Or is there some other trigger or feeling (sadness, anger, boredom, fatigue)? If you notice that your desire to eat stems from a trigger other than the need for fuel, decide whether eating is the best choice for you at that moment and if there are better options.

**WHEN?** Tune into your own body for guidance on when you need to eat, using hunger as your primary cue. You will probably find patterns in your hunger, but you may also notice that each day you do NOT feel the same level of hunger at the same times.

**WHAT?** Certainly, there are foods that are more nutritious than others, and having a general idea about which foods are best for your overall health is important. But labeling foods as “good” or “bad” is a tunnel-vision approach to eating that does more harm than good. By avoiding certain foods or food groups, we miss out on valuable nutrients – and we miss out on the pleasure that comes from those foods! In addition, thinking in “should” and “should-not” terms often leaves us feeling badly about ourselves if we eat the “wrong” foods. Since negative emotions are often a trigger for overeating, these feelings can start an overeating cycle.

**HOW?** How do you usually eat your food? Do you eat quickly and mindlessly, while distracted only to discover that your plate is empty and you really didn’t taste your food? If so, you are missing out on one of life’s greatest pleasures – and probably eating more than you need or eating unsatisfying foods. Try slowing down, savoring the bite in your mouth, focusing on the ambiance, minimizing distractions. You’ll notice you get more pleasure out of less food!

**HOW MUCH?** Did you know your stomach is the size of your fist? Keep that in mind the next time you decide how much food you need to fuel your body. One technique for eating an amount that will leave you feeling good afterwards is to use a hunger-fullness scale. With 1 being ravished and 10 being stuffed, rate your level of hunger before starting your meal or snack. Then, decide how full you want to be after eating. Serve yourself that amount only, and check in halfway through the eating process to reevaluate your level of fullness and determine if you need to keep eating. If you find you have trouble stopping when you’ve had enough, try some new strategies such as serving your food on a smaller plate, putting away the extra food from the meal instead of leaving it on the table or counter, or clearing your palate with gum or a mint.

In addition to creating a more enjoyable relationship with food, being mindful about why, when, what, how and how much we eat can do wonders for our physical health and weight. Remember that being mindful is a habit and new habits take practice!

[www.tcme.org](http://www.tcme.org)  
[www.amihungry.com](http://www.amihungry.com)



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# Fresh & Healthy

## Recipe of the Month

### Raspberry Meringue Cookies

Looking for a delicious cookie recipe that you can enjoy guilt-free this holiday? These festive looking treats definitely fit the bill with just 67 calories for two cookies.

#### Ingredients

3 egg whites  
 3 Tbsp plus 1 tsp raspberry gelatin powder  
 ¾ cup sugar  
 1 tsp white vinegar  
 ⅛ tsp salt  
 2 cups (12 oz.) semisweet chocolate chips  
 ½ cup finely chopped pecans

#### Topping

¼ cup semisweet chocolate chips  
 1 tsp shortening



#### Preparation

Place egg whites in a large bowl; let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Next, beat egg whites until soft peaks form. Gradually add gelatin, beating until combined. Slowly add sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time, beating until stiff peaks form. Beat in vinegar and salt. Fold in chocolate chips and nuts.

Drop by rounded teaspoonfuls onto a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake at 250° for 20-25 minutes or until firm to the touch. Turn oven off and leave cookies in the oven with door open for about 1 and 1/2 hours or until cool.

Makes 7 ½ dozen.

#### Nutritional information per serving:

1 serving (2 cookies) equals 68 calories, 4 g fat (2 g saturated fat), 0 cholesterol, 14 mg sodium, 10 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 1 g protein.

### Ask the Health Coach

**Q** I have low blood pressure, should I eat more salt?

**A** The short answer is that this may help temporarily; however, staying well hydrated and eating a well-balanced diet can prevent blood pressure from dropping too low.

Low blood pressure, also called hypotension, is generally defined as a reading of 90/60 or lower. But what may be considered low blood pressure for one person may be normal for someone else. If you experience a sudden drop in your blood pressure or symptoms of dizziness, fainting, nausea, blurred vision, fatigue, rapid, shallow breathing or cold clammy skin, see your doctor as low blood pressure may be a sign of some underlying health concern or the result of certain medications.

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/low-blood-pressure/DS00590>

# Reducing Fat in Your *Holiday Recipes*

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or even the winter solstice, the holidays are a time for feasting. As the year comes to a close, many of us dig out favorite recipes for cookies, pies, soups and holiday meats. Delicious as they are, these recipes do not always have the healthiest ingredients. Luckily, there are things you can do to improve your holiday diet while still enjoying your favorite dishes.

Here are some tips for making holiday recipes a little healthier:

- Substitute cream, sour cream, milk or cheese with non- or low-fat versions. Non-fat plain yogurt can replace sour cream.
- Choose the leanest cuts possible and remove skin from poultry before cooking.
- Replace whole eggs with egg whites or egg substitutes.
- Prepare soups and stews ahead of time and then chill them. The fat will float to the top and harden and you can remove it easily before reheating.
- Use three ripe, well-mashed bananas in place of ½ cup of butter or oil in baked muffins or quick breads. You can also substitute a cup of unsweetened applesauce for a cup of butter, margarine, oil or shortening.

## Use Healthy Fats

If fat is essential to a recipe, try to stay away from saturated and trans fats and use monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats instead. Mono- and polyunsaturated fats such as those found in canola, safflower and olive oil actually protect against heart disease. If a recipe calls for butter or lard, try substituting it with a "good fat" oil.

Cooking comes from the heart. Tell your loved ones you care with healthier holiday foods! Enjoy!

[www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)  
[www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)



Looking for delicious, healthy recipes the whole family can enjoy? Check out our Healthy Recipes from WebMD! Simply log in to MyBlueService from [bcbsfl.com](http://bcbsfl.com) and access the **Living Healthy** tab. Click on **My Health Manager** and under Healthy Fun, select **Healthy Recipes**.



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