



# Food For Thought

For references, just click underlined links

With increasingly chaotic schedules and never enough time in the day, it's no mystery as to why Americans often fall short when it comes to being intentional about nutrition. Knowing what and how much we are putting into our bodies is becoming increasingly difficult with perpetual distractions, confusing health claims, and constant cravings. The practice of mindful eating has been proven to [reduce weight gain](#), improve [satisfaction from food](#) and curb emotionally induced cravings.

## 5 TIPS TO MINDFUL EATING PRACTICES

### Out of Sight, Out of Mind.

There is much research to support the phrase when it comes to nutrition. Cornell University conducted a [study](#) where secretaries were given chocolate candies in containers that were either clear, so the candy was visible, or solid, so it was not. Those who were given clear containers consumed 71% more candy, amounting to an extra 77 calories. Seeing food causes us to make the conscious decision of whether to eat it, and seeing it more often causes us to eat it more frequently. Turn this principle in your favor by moving that salty bag of chips to the back of the pantry or out of reach and replacing it with a bag of almonds or whole grain cereal.

### Slow Down!

Eating slower has been proven to decrease the amount of food that is consumed within a [meal](#). It takes the gut about 20 minutes to signal the brain with the feeling of fullness. Slowing down your meals can help reduce the consumption of unnecessary amounts of [food](#), effectively aiding in weight loss and better overall health. Slower eating has also been shown to improve satisfaction from food. Enjoy your food more by allowing enough time to properly consume and digest your meal. Consciously increase the number of times you chew each bite. This is an effective way to aid in appetite control and has been proven to reduce the total amount of food consumed by nearly [15%](#).

### Eyes off the screen

Whether we are scrolling social media on our smartphones, sending emails on our laptops, or watching the news, our mealtimes are rarely without digital distractions. Only 46% of US households eat together as a family in absence of at least one TV, smartphone or laptop. The consequences of distracted eating should be major cause for concern. In one study, participants consumed 71% more food while viewing TV than those who ate without [distraction](#). TV and other distractions interfere with our bodies' natural cue to signal fullness, so that we don't realize how much we eat when multitasking. Do your body a favor and unplug for your next meal.

### Look at the label

Start paying attention to the label on the foods you purchase. Marketing terms such as "light", "sugar free", and "low-fat" are often associated with improved health.

Unfortunately, these terms are commonly used to mislead consumers into believing the product is healthy. While these claims give little evidence that the food is healthy, studies have shown that consumers eat far more of something labeled as "healthy", even when it's not. Study participants who were given granola labeled as "low-fat" ate 49% more than those provided the same granola not [labeled](#). This is especially troubling considering "low-fat" foods often achieve their label at the cost of adding more sugar. To complicate matters further, there are more than 60 different names that sugar often goes [by](#); it's no wonder why consumers are confused about what they're eating!

### Discern between [Physical Hunger & Emotional Cravings](#)

Lastly it is important to recognize when your body is actually hungry. This might sound simple but oftentimes we use food as a distraction from the stresses in our lives which can lead to an unhealthy relationship with food. Before you reach for the fridge, ask yourself if you are bored, stressed or sad. Also recognize that cravings often take the shape of a specific food. True hunger usually doesn't discriminate between foods. Additionally, the sweet treat that you are craving may be your body asking for something else. For example, if you are craving chocolate, your body might be deficient in magnesium, so snack on raw nuts and seeds or fruit. (See [cravings conversion chart](#)).

Try implementing mindful eating practices into your daily life and let these five tips be food for thought.

