

Healthy Habits



Breaking Bad Eating Habits

Bad habits are made to be broken! Below are some strategies to help reset your routine and start eating smarter!

If you're a serious snacker – While snacking is important for maintaining metabolism and blood sugar, it's easy to overindulge and overeat. To help curb your hunger and keep up your energy between meals, allow yourself two 100- to 300-calorie snacks each day. Rather than candy or chips, be mindful to choose wholesome snacks like whole-grain crackers and cheese, a handful of almonds, baby carrots with hummus, or nonfat Greek yogurt with fresh fruit.

If you're a mindless muncher – Do you often find yourself on the couch with the TV remote in one hand and a not-so-nutritious snack in the other? Spaced-out eating can easily lead to excess calorie consumption. Determine which situations trigger mindless eating for you, then consciously make an effort to eat only when you're fully engaged with your food. Also, measure out a single-serving of the food, rather than taking the container with you, and swap high-calorie snacks for lower-calorie ones like chopped veggies, fresh fruit, air-popped popcorn, or whole-grain cereal.

If you eat your emotions – When work has you stressed or you've just had a crummy day, many turn to food for a delicious, instant mood-booster. However, feeding your fears and frustrations, instead of confronting them, can lead to a cycle of more bad moods as well as steady weight gain. Before reaching for the ice cream or your favorite edible pick-me-up, stop to think about what's really bothering you. Work through the emotions and try to cheer yourself up with a relaxing walk, watching your favorite comedy, or calling a friend.

If you let loose on weekends – Even if you eat very well Monday through Friday, it's still possible to undo five days of healthy eating with regular weekend free-for-alls. Since weekends can be full of social outings that include overindulging in food and alcohol, strategize for success. Have a mini-meal before heading out to dinner so you're not so hungry when the appetizers are getting passed around the table, and volunteer to be the designated driver to limit your alcohol and calorie intake.

If all your meals come in boxes, bags, cans, etc. – Prepackaged foods like frozen dinners, soups, and rice mixes can be sneaky sources of unhealthy fats, sugar, sodium, and excess calories. If you don't have time to always prep and cook a meal, don't fret! Just pay close attention to the nutrition label on your pre-prepared foods. Look for options that are lower in calories, fat, and sodium and higher in fiber, whole grains, and nutrient-rich vegetables.

Healthy Habits



If you eat on the go – Eating on the run (e.g., while driving, walking to your next destination, multitasking) can be another form of mindless munching and may leave you feeling dissatisfied and unsure of just how much you ate. Make it a priority to build time to eat into your day. When you have no option but to eat on the go, be prepared with healthy pre-portioned snacks like a high-fiber granola bar, a single-serving bag of nuts, or a package of whole-grain crackers with peanut butter.

If you're a speed-eater – Wolfing down your food can lead to consuming excess calories and—since it takes the brain almost 20 minutes to send a message to the stomach that it's full—feeling overstuffed, uncomfortable, and lethargic. Make a conscious effort to slow down when eating. Avoid finger foods, and instead choose snacks/meals that require a plate and utensils to eat. Also, pause often while eating to take a drink of water.

If you're a sugar fiend – Though a chocolate bar may satisfy your sweet tooth and give you a short burst of energy, you'll be consuming mostly empty calories and soon experiencing a sugar crash. While an occasional candy indulgence is OK, try to satiate your sugar cravings with more nutritious snacks like unsweetened dried fruit, lightly sweetened whole-grain cereal, flavored nonfat Greek yogurt, or a few peanut or almond M&Ms (a little protein mixed with sugar can help avoid the post-sugar slump).

Source: Real Simple (www.realsimple.com)