

Mindful Eating – A Healthy Approach to Food

Growing kids need healthy food. What we eat directly affects our health – at present and in the future. Childhood obesity is still a major health issue. Doctors tell us that kids are eating too much salt. Parents can encourage healthy eating. *Mindful eating* will help.

Mindfulness is simply the practice of *paying attention*. When you are mindful, you do not judge or compare yourself to others. You just focus your attention on where you are and what you are doing at any given moment.

Too often, families engage in distracted eating: in the car, in front of the TV, or during a computer game. It becomes a family routine, and it is unhealthy.

A healthier approach to meals and snacks is *mindful eating*. With mindful eating, kids pay attention to:

- **The food** they eat. Is it sweet, salty or sour?
- **Their feelings** before and after eating. What does it feel like to be full or half-full?
- **Their mood** — how food or hunger affects it. Do they eat when bored or anxious? Does food help when they feel cranky and tired?

- **The affects** of food to help them gain energy, grow and stay healthy.
- **The people** preparing and growing the food .

Begin the practice of mindful eating - *today*. This healthy approach to food benefits you and your family.

Start with small changes.

- Ask if your child is hungry — before the meal.
- Begin each meal with thankfulness — for the food and for the person who prepared the food.
- Let your child put food on his plate. It helps him learn portion control based on how hungry he feels.
- Observe the food. Look at color and texture. How does it smell? Describe how it tastes.
- Eat your food slowly, without TV, computer or smart phone.

- Learn about the food — preparation, how it grows and recipes.
- Take note of how you feel about 15 minutes after you eat. It takes that long for your body to feel full.

Mindful eating helps your child *value* food. Food becomes a way to good health instead of a way to feel full.



To learn more, log on to:

psychologytoday.com/basics/childdevelopment

thecenterformindfuleating.org

msue.msu.edu

Search for *Mindful Eating* on your favorite search engine.

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