

4 Enjoying Eating



We are born knowing how much we need to eat to feel full. As we grow, we often lose this ability. This can be for many reasons such as being made to eat all the food on our plate, forced to eat foods we don't like, or being rewarded with dessert if we ate our main meal.

Being aware of hunger and fullness and taking the time to enjoy food can help us to eat the amount that is right for our body.

Eating slowly and being aware of the taste of our food can help us to enjoy it. If we enjoy our food, we will feel more satisfied after eating.

Understanding your hunger and fullness

When we are hungry, food tastes stronger and more delicious because our body is ready for it. This makes the food more satisfying to eat, leaving us feeling very contented and happy.

Looking for signs that tell you that you are hungry or full can help you work out when to eat and how much to eat. Encourage your child to look for signs that tell them they are hungry or full.

Activity: Use the hunger scale below to help you find out your hunger or fullness level right now.

0

Empty

- Drained
- Weak
- Sick
- Can't think straight
- Will eat anything
- Grumpy



2

Hungry

- Rumbling stomach
- Thinking about what to eat
- Feel like a meal, rather than a snack



5

Comfortable

- Stomach feel slightly stretched
- Feel satisfied



7

Overfull

- Uncomfortable
- Heavy
- Bloating



10

Stuffed

- Can't fit another bite in
- Stomach feels like exploding
- Painful



Activity:

Another question to ask is are you thirsty? Are your lips or mouth dry? Like hunger, our body will tell us when and how much to drink.

Understanding your child's hunger and fullness

Get to know your child's eating patterns.

- Do they like to snack?
- Do they eat more during the day and less for the evening meal?
- Do they eat less when they are tired?
- Do they eat more when they have been active?
- Do they give you cues when they are hungry or full?

Working with your child's eating pattern rather than trying to control it will help you to worry less. This will help you get to know what is normal for them. Your job as a parent is to provide regular meals and snacks in a relaxed environment and let your child eat as much or as little as they wish.

Mindful family eating

- Sit together as a family for meals as often as possible.
- Turn the TV off and put other screens away when eating. This includes snack time too.
- If your child is old enough, let them serve themselves during meal times or ask them how much food they want on their plate.
- Eat mindfully yourself. Eat at a relaxed pace until you are satisfied, even if it means leaving food on the plate.
- Allow your child to stop eating when they have had enough.

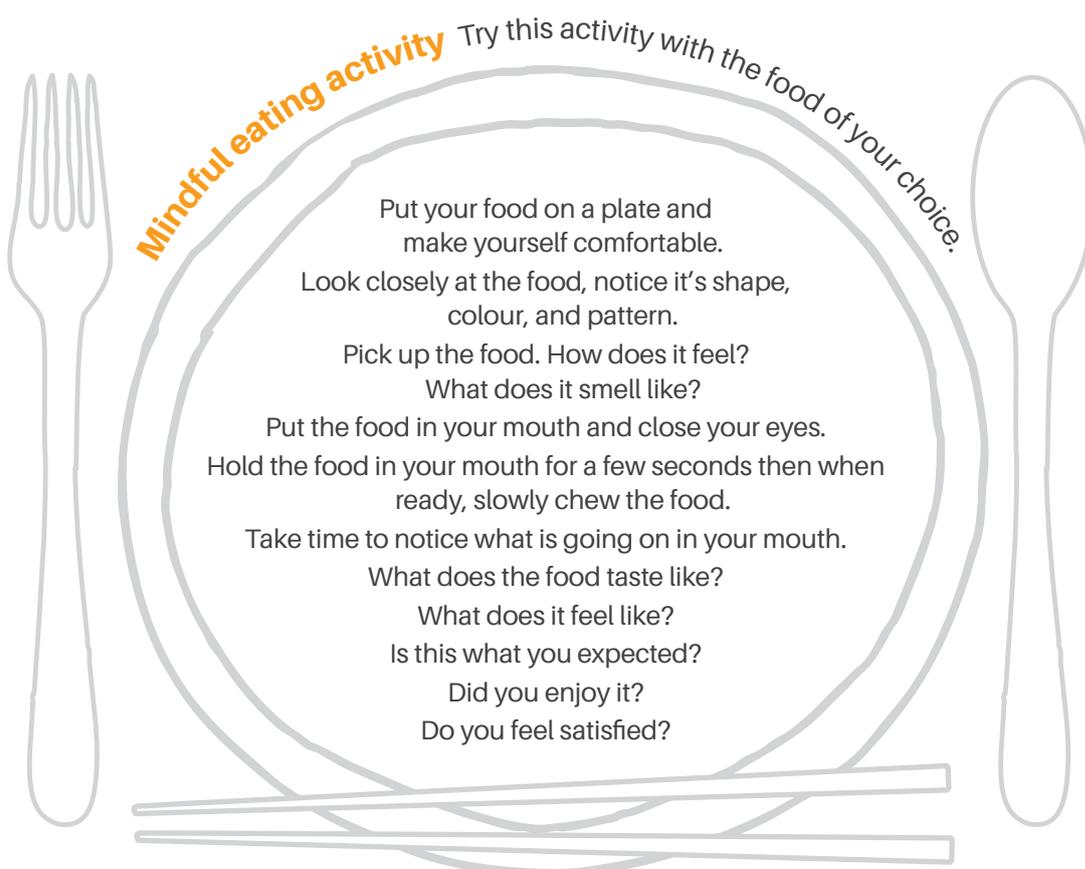
Non-mindful eating

Sometimes as adults we miss out on the full taste and enjoyment of a meal. Common reasons for this include:

- Eating when we are not hungry.
- Eating fast.
- Eating whilst doing other things at the same time.
- Eating when watching TV or other screens e.g. phone or computer.
- Feeling angry, upset or anxious.
- Feeling guilty about what we are eating.

What about our children?

- Not being hungry.
- Feeling anxious or upset.
- Being told to finish their plate.
- Feeling watched and under pressure.
- Watching TV or other screens and playing with toys whilst eating.



Mindful eating encourages us to focus on eating and savouring every bite. This helps us enjoy the taste, feel satisfied and gives our brain more time to register that we are full. This can take up to 20-30 minutes after eating.