

## Eating Wisely

Eating right is a core principal in making healthy lifestyle choices. But what does it mean to eat “right”? Most interpret it to mean eating only carrots and celery and never enjoying another wonderful dessert again. Not so! Changing your mindset from eating “right” to eating “wisely” can help you make food choices that are healthier, give you more energy, and be thoroughly satisfying in the taste department too.



### Eating Wisely Tip #1: Why Are You Eating?

WHY we eat is just as important as WHAT we eat. Generally we eat to either satisfy hunger or in response to a strong emotion. Knowing when we are hungry is pretty easy to determine. Our bodies are designed to give us signals that we need nourishment. Rumbling tummies, low energy, weakness and distraction are all indicators that our body is in need. However, if we are eating in the absence of these indicators, there might

be another reason we are eating.

According to Weight Watchers, emotional eating is universal, and it is not confined to just one emotion. People demonstrate strong desires to eat when they are not only sad, but also happy, excited, busy, anxious, depressed, stressed, bored...you name it. The chemicals in our brains interact in complex ways, but the end result is eating during these emotional moments makes us FEEL better.

So, what can we do? Distract yourself. When you recognize the urge to eat is coming from something other than physical hunger, take another action before reaching for the fridge. Take a quick walk, clean out a drawer or file, make a phone call, do a chore, drink a glass of water. Do anything to interrupt that initial pull to food. If you find yourself still wanting to eat AFTER completing your task, then you are probably nearing the physical hunger threshold.

### Eating Wisely Tip #2: How/When Are You Eating?

Let's start with SPEED. How fast do you eat? Are you usually the first one done at dinner? Can you eat a whole meal in less than 10 minutes? Then you are probably eating too fast. Speed-eating does not give your body enough time to signal the brain that it is already full. According to WebMD.com, it takes

about 20 minutes for the brain to register fullness once eating begins. Thus, eating too quickly can easily result in higher calorie intake than necessary, resulting in bloating, sluggishness, and self-recrimination.

The next step is to analyze WHEN you eat. This has less to do with time-of-day and more to do with method. Are you multitasking – eating while doing something else? According to Prevention.com, eating while doing other activities takes our focus off how we physically feel, so it is much easier to lose track of how much we have eaten.

### Solutions for the How/When dilemma:



- **Sit when you eat** – Sitting down while eating inherently focuses your mind and body on what is in front of you...in this case the plate of food. Focused eating results in mindful awareness of how full we feel.
- **Chew slowly and take small bites** – Again, the object here is to give your



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“There is no diet that will do what eating healthy does.”

~Anonymous



## Portion Distortion

**Definition:** The amount of food or drink a person chooses to eat or drink at one time.

Portion sizes have, in some cases, doubled over the last 20 years. It can be hard to eat a healthy portion when:

- restaurants often serve large portions and meals
- food producers package food in larger sizes
- people have lost their perspective on healthy portion size

Try to eat smaller portions by:

- splitting a dish with a friend
- eating one slice/piece instead of two
- using a smaller plate

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### *Eating Wisely (continued from page 1)*

brain a chance to catch up with your stomach. Taking smaller bites and chewing food longer gives digestion a chance to take place. Putting utensils down between bites can also help. One clever trick is to eat using your non-dominant hand to slow yourself down.

- **Avoid music or TV when eating**  
– Our internal clock tends to set its pace to whatever external stimuli it encounters. When we play fast music we tend to walk faster. Thus, when we eat to music or to a TV show, our natural pace tends to increase to match our environment. Turning off the TV or music allows a naturally slower pace to take over.

### **Eating Wisely Tip #3: Know the Impact of Your Choice**

What you choose to eat impacts your satisfaction on a pleasure level, but also on a physical level. For example, a donut can taste fantastic – for about 90 seconds. Ten minutes later your stomach might hurt, you feel gross and sluggish. Was the short-lived pleasure of

the donut worth the 60 minutes of miserable digestion? Sometimes the answer is “Yes,” and that’s OK. But sometimes the answer will be “No,” the immediate satisfaction is not worth the physical consequences or guilt.

### **Eating Wisely Tip #4: Cost vs. Benefit**

Let’s face it, it is cheap to eat badly. When a \$5.00 pizza can feed a family of four, why spend more on other options? According to HuffingtonPost.com, choosing healthier food over cheaper options can cost up to \$550 more per person per year. That can really add up! However, that cost does not take into account the financial consequences of diet-related health issues such as obesity, medications, gym costs, etc. When those items are figured in, the cost of cheap eating goes up dramatically.

And one extra note on this topic – just because you paid for something, doesn’t mean you must force yourself to eat it all. Part of what you are paying for when you buy a meal is the enjoyment of the food. Once enjoyment has passed, put the rest in a to-go bag and take it home. If it can’t be taken home, leave it. It’s OK.

Eating wisely requires a little more thought than our typical mindless noshing approach, but it doesn’t mean denying yourself every food you love. It simply means paying attention to what you really want, why you want it, and how you will feel after you have it.

## Featured Service: Weight and Nutrition Coaching

Finding a healthy balance when it comes to eating and exercise can be big challenge. Let PAS’ team of expert dieticians help you find what works for you! Each individual has unique challenges when it comes to making lifestyle changes to improve overall nutrition. The dieticians at PAS can help you:

- manage weight
- customize a healthy meal plan for you and your family
- develop nutritional strategies to prevent or manage health conditions such as diabetes, osteoporosis, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and food intolerances
- set goals for increasing activity
- achieve health lifestyle changes



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