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A wellness newsletter from your local EFAP.

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Food and Mood

As a society we are all learning more and more about health. We are learning that there's more to health than the prevention of disease. That there's more to health than just the body. That our physical health impacts our mental health and vice versa - they are intricately and complexly connected. We know that diet and exercise are good for our bodies, so is it true that they are also good for our mental health and wellness? Absolutely.

Our learning and understanding in this area is still in the early stages. Places around the world like the *Food and Mood Center in Australia* (www.foodandmoodcenter.com.au) are researching Nutritional Psychiatry and the ways our food choices influence our brain, our moods and mental health. This is exciting because it empowers us all with increased ability to choose and behave in a way that supports desired changes in our mental health. This research provides more evidence for all of us to know that our brains are not rigid but are in fact malleable to change and grow and re-wire over time. Food is just one of the important ways we can impact that process for greater mental health.

This newsletter is all about FOOD, something we can ALL relate to. We hope you enjoy it.

Wishing you health and wellness today and always,

Kelsi Baine, MSc, CCC



“Mindful eating is a way to become reacquainted with the guidance of our internal nutritionist.”

– Jan Chozen Bays

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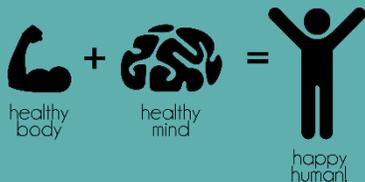
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Did you know...

- Apples are made of 25% air, which is why they float.
- Avocado has the highest protein content of all fruit.
- Cabbage is 91% water.
- Cherries are a member of the rose family.
- Lemons contain more sugar than strawberries.
- Honey is the only edible **food** that never goes bad.
- Eggplants are fruits and classified as berries.
- A bunch of bananas is called a hand.
- There are close to 10,000 varieties of apples.
- Broccoli contains twice the vitamin C of an orange.
- Cranberries bounce like a rubber ball when ripe.
- Peanuts are actually an ingredient in dynamite. They have an oil in them called glycerol that's used to create nitroglycerin, a key ingredient in dynamite.
- Cucumbers are 96% water.



Mindful Eating and Disordered Eating Prevention

“The core principles of mindful eating include being aware of the nourishment available through the process of food preparation and consumption, choosing enjoyable and nutritious foods, acknowledging food preferences nonjudgmentally, recognizing and honoring physical hunger and satiety cues, and using wisdom to guide eating decisions.” –Cheryl Harris, MPH, RD

Despite our many individual differences, people have a lot in common. We all need air to breathe, clean water to drink, shelter and warmth, and we all need to eat. With regard to food, some of us are vegetarian, some strictly meat eaters, some gluten-free for health reasons, some have restrictions based on respective religions or due to chronic conditions like diabetes. Regardless, we all need to eat several times a day, in order to live well and be well. Food nourishes our bodies, minds, and spirits. When we eat mindfully, we intentionally tap into that 3-fold nourishment and feel a deeper satisfaction than we do simply by eating mechanically.

To get a picture of what mindful eating might look like, let's take a peek at some opposite scenarios:

- It's 7 in the evening and you haven't eaten anything since that bagel at 11 a.m. You're famished so you grab the container of leftovers from the fridge and eat it quickly as you scroll through your social media account.
- You've prepared a lovely meal for your family so you all might have some quality time together. You're so focused on your kid's behavior (what they're not eating, how much they're fidgeting, whether or not they're feeding the dog under the table) that your own food gets cold and you lose your appetite. You end up heating your plate after the kids have gone to bed and eat in the living room while watching the news.
- It's been a long day. You curl up on the sofa to watch a show. You're not hungry but you decide to get some munchies anyway. You don't want to dirty a bowl so you eat straight out of the bag of tortilla chips. Before you know it, you've finished the whole bag, you feel bloated and remorseful.

In each scenario, you haven't paid attention to what you're eating, how you're eating, and/or when you need to eat. Letting ourselves get too hungry is a signal of not paying attention. Eating while we're multitasking (driving, working at the computer, talking on the phone, or even being overly engrossed in conversation with the people we're sharing a meal with) distracts us from mindful eating.

Disordered eating is very common in our society – many of us eat when we're not hungry either because we're eating too fast or doing too much at once to notice that we've had enough. We skip a meal because we're too busy or because we don't feel like eating (it's inconvenient, we don't have time, we don't have anything in the house). In short, we let ourselves get too hungry or too full. We have to pay attention and slow down to prevent this from happening.

Whatever the circumstances of when, where, with whom, and what you eat, take a moment to pay attention to the food. Take a deep breath and pause for a second to notice your hunger cues. Is your stomach rumbling? Do you feel slightly woozy from low blood sugar (something we are all susceptible to if we don't eat frequently enough)? Take a look at the food. Notice the colours and textures. Smell your food. When you take a bite, savour the

(continued on next page)



Online Resources

For more tips and information on eating for a healthy body and mind:

<https://www.thecenterformindful-eating.org/>

<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/be-mindful-of-your-eating-habits/>

<https://www.dietitians.ca/Downloads/Factsheets/5-Tips-for-Healthy-Eating.aspx>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/cravings/200906/change-your-food-attitude>

www.foodandmoodcenter.com.au

<https://www.camh.ca/en/camh-news-and-stories/the-emerging-link-between-food-and-mental-health>

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/aa131371>

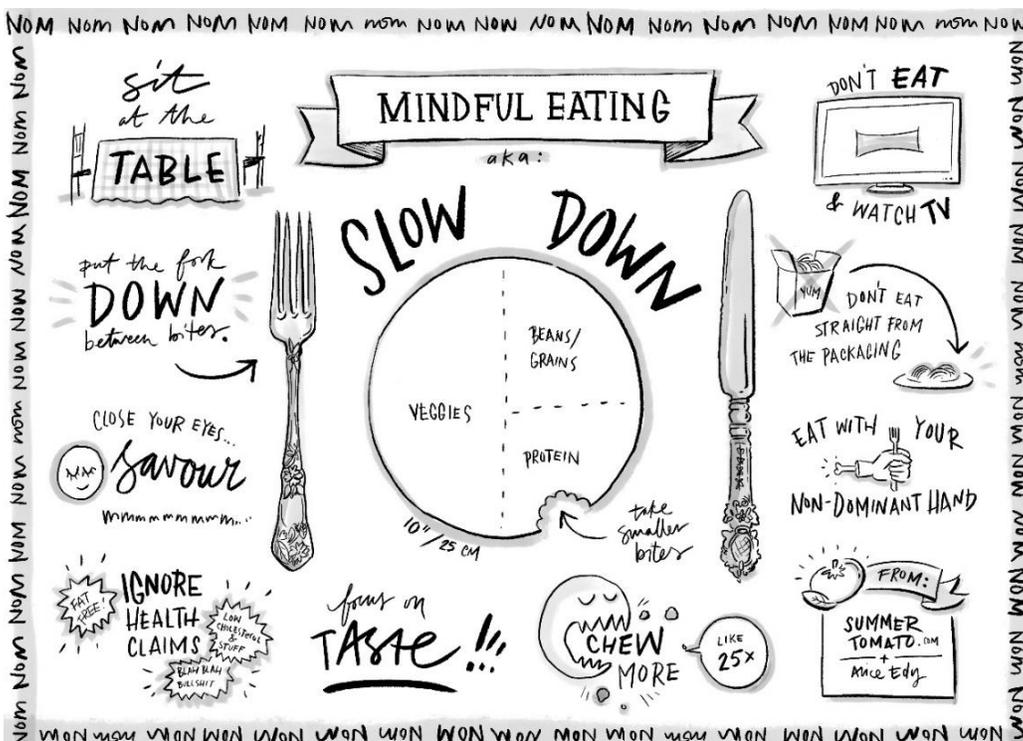
Mindful Eating and Disordered Eating Prevention (cont'd)

flavour. Pay attention. Notice how it feels as the food makes its way to your belly. Chew your food well. Breathe between bites. Close your eyes for a second and breathe deeply. Maybe light a candle, use a nice placemat for yourself and use your best dishes. Honour yourself. Eating is an important part of self-care.

There will be times when you have to eat in the car or in a noisy room or when you have to put off eating longer than is ideal. But by increasing your awareness of your hunger and satiety cues, what and how you're eating will help you to feel better, more grounded and centred.

If you're unsure of how much or how often you should be eating, ask your doctor or consult with a registered dietitian. You're worth it!

By Tara Hope, MA, RCC



Eating for Mental Health & Well Being**

The idea that our eating habits have a significant impact on our physical health has been a well-established fact for many years. More recently, research has provided evidence to show that our eating habits are also closely related to our mental health and well-being.

So, what are healthy eating habits? Let's start with the types of food that have been found to support mental health. A number of studies have shown a range of outcomes connecting nutrition and mental health, including:

- eating a diet high in vegetables and fruits is linked with feelings of personal well-being
- eating a “Mediterranean diet” (a diet high in vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, beans, cereals, grains, fish, and unsaturated fats such as olive oil) is associated with reductions in depression
- eating a “poor” diet with high levels of saturated fat, refined carbohydrates and processed food products is linked to mental health problems in children and adolescents
- eating a diet high in antioxidant vitamins and minerals can be a protective factor against a number of emotional and neurological conditions, including Alzheimer's disease, anxiety disorders, ADHD, autism, dementia, depression, fibromyalgia, Huntington's disease, multiple sclerosis, and schizophrenia.

Additional information about what constitutes a healthy diet is provided by *Canada's 2019 Food Guide*. The Food Guide offers a number of recommendations about healthy nutrition that can be understood to benefit both physical and mental health.

Canada's Food Guide recommends eating:

- “*plenty of vegetables and fruits*” (composing approximately half of each meal)
- “*protein foods*,” including plant-based proteins (composing approximately one quarter of each meal) and
- “*wholegrain foods*” (composing approximately one quarter of each meal).

The Food Guide also recommends:

- making “*water your drink of choice*” and
- limiting “*highly processed foods*” (especially foods high in added sodium, sugars and saturated fats).

It seems apparent that *what* we eat is an important part of supporting mental health and well-being. However, *how* we eat can also be a significant factor.

In addition to the type and quality of the foods we consume, *Canada's Food Guide* recommendations also include:

“*Be mindful of your eating habits.*” Being more mindful of our relationship to food can help us make healthier choices regarding what, why, when, where and how much we eat.

“*Enjoy your food.*” This involves choosing foods that we find interesting and pleasing to the taste, as well as healthy. Culture can play an important role in the enjoyment of food – both by observing one's own culinary cultural traditions, and by exploring those of other cultures.

“*Cook more often.*” By cooking at home more and eating out less, we are generally able to choose healthier meal options and save money.

“*Eat meals with others.*” As food is a universal part of human experience, eating together can be a great way to spend quality time with others. Strengthening relationships, in turn, is correlated with good mental health and well-being.

In summary, the more we educate ourselves about healthy eating habits and make healthy choices regarding both *what* and *how* we eat, the more we support mental health and well-being in our lives.

**References

[Canada's Food Guide \(2019\), The Government of Canada](https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/Diet%20&%20Mental%20Health)
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