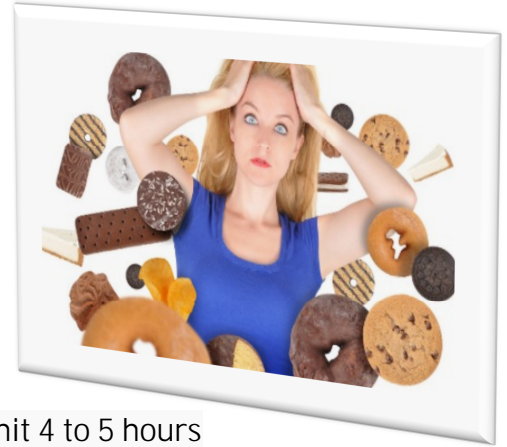


Control Your Eating

Humans have an instinctual (even good) fear of hunger. Today, most of us know where our next meal is coming from, yet our reaction to hunger has not evolved with our convenience-centered world. This is why even the thought of being hungry may send you running to the mini-mart for sustenance. If you want to control your eating habits, you must tune in to your body's signal to eat. Hunger is a physical cue that you need energy. It can be your best diet ally and if you listen to your body, you'll instinctively feed it the right amount. Fall out of touch, though, and hunger becomes diet enemy number one: You may eat more than you need or get too hungry and stoke out-of-control cravings.



Refuel every 4 hours

Can't tell what true hunger feels like? Set your watch. Moderate to full-fledged hunger (our ideal window for eating) is most likely to hit 4 to 5 hours after a balanced meal. Waiting too long to eat can send you on an emergency hunt for energy—and the willpower to make healthful choices plummets. Regular eating keeps blood sugar and energy stable, which prevents you from feeling an extreme need for fuel.

Eat breakfast without fail

A study published in the British Journal of Nutrition tracked the diets of nearly 900 adults and found that when people ate more fat, protein, and carbohydrates in the morning, they stayed satisfied and ate less over the course of the day than those who ate their bigger meals later on. Unfortunately, many Americans start off on an empty stomach. In one survey, consumers reported that even when they eat in the morning, the meal is a full breakfast only about one-third of the time.

Build high-volume meals

Solid foods that have a high fluid content can help you suppress hunger. When we eat foods with a high water content like fruits and vegetables, versus low water-content foods like crackers and pretzels, we get bigger portions for less calories. Bottom line: You consume more food but cut calories at the same time.

Serve yourself healthy stuff first

Whether you're having a meal at home or choosing from a cafeteria line, load your plate with the healthiest items first. Diners at buffets tend to take larger servings of the first few foods they see, a study shows. So, think before you start piling up your plate. Dish up veggies or whole grains before fattier meats and sides.



Use blue plates

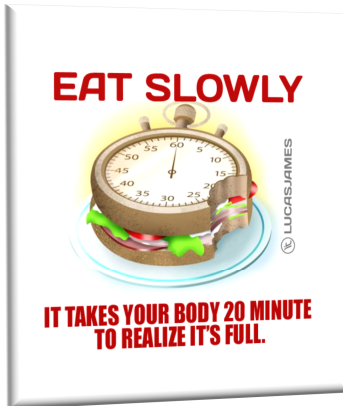
Believe it or not, the color of your dishes might make a difference in how much food you serve yourself. The more the food blends in with the plate color, the more chow you're likely to take, research shows. So consider using plates in a different hue.

Use smaller bowls and plates

The size of your dishes and utensils gives your brain cues about how much you're "supposed" to eat -- and a bigger dish means more food. In one study, people at a Chinese buffet who got a large plate served themselves 52% more food, and ate 45% more, than those with smaller plates.

Eat slowly, and drink water

Take smaller bites. Chew your food slowly. Take a little more time between forkfuls. And drink water while you're eating. These simple steps are key if you want to cut back on calories and still feel full.



Hit the pause button before giving in to a craving

Eating because you're bored, tired, or tense can make you feel out of control. Try to delay the urge to graze: When a craving hits, do something else for 5 to 10 minutes, then see if you still want to eat. Chances are the urge will have faded, at least a little.

Keep unhealthy snacks out of sight

Stash junk foods like candy and chips where you can't see them. You might eat less. When office workers kept chocolates on their desks, they ate 48% more than when the candies were 6 feet away. If they put chocolates in their desk drawers, they ate 25% less than if the sweet stuff was on their desks.

Chew gum in the grocery store

Maybe you've heard you shouldn't shop for food when you're hungry. Well, you might want to pop in a piece of sugarless gum before you head down the aisles, too. While chewing gum, people felt less hungry and had fewer junk-food cravings, according to two studies. As a result, the people bought fewer high-calorie snack foods, like chips, and brought home more healthy options, like vegetables.

Always order the "small"

A large container can tempt you to eat more food, even if you're full or it doesn't taste good. In one study, moviegoers were given free popcorn in either medium or large tubs -- some was fresh and yummy, and some was stale. People given the fresh stuff in large containers ate 45% more than those who got it in medium tubs did. Even those who got stale popcorn in large containers ate 33% more than those with medium tubs of it.

